MINISTRY

ON THE

EPHESIANS

J. N. DARBY

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MINISTRY

ON THE EPISTLE TO THE

EPHESIANS

By

J. N. DARBY

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NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

CHAPTER I.

THE apostle seems here to dwell on the purposes of God with regard to us. He does not so much speak of the means which God has made use of in order to reconcile us with Himself (the satisfaction that has been made to His justice, though the Spirit dwells thereon likewise); but the subject is specially the blessedness in which God has placed us in His counsels of grace.

It is certainly a blessed thing for us fully to understand the means which God has made use of, in order to bring us to Himself; but God has made known to us these things, in order that we may be occupied with the things to which we are called. It is in the enjoyment of these things that we put on the character of the Christian, and that the soul grows. They enter into our very existence; and when the heart has laid hold of them, there is much more of the Christian and of testimony in us, so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, there results a much clearer and stronger point of attraction for the world.

Those who dwell in Spirit in heaven partake of its spirit, and go on increasing in the things which they find there. They are in relationship with God; they enjoy what God has given, and that is certainly most precious; but above all, they enjoy God Himself: and here is the exceeding grace of Him who desires that we should always dwell near Him, and that we should know His thoughts and His counsels. This is what we should desire and seek after, and thus we shall understand better what is well pleasing to the Lord, and what is worthy of Him. Such are the subjects of which the apostle speaks to us in the chapter which is before us.

Verses 1–3. In Jesus Christ, the Head of the body, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. It is there God sets us; and we know it, beloved, we know it, but more in theory than in practice.

Verse 4. As I have already said, the apostle here not only speaks to us of the means, but of the source of our blessing in the unspeakable counsels of God, and of the end which God proposes to Himself; for it is said, "That ye may be holy

and without blame before him in love." This is the thought of God about us: He wishes to have us before Him, and to have us there happy and for Himself.

There is only one thing in which God does not suffice for Himself, and that is, in His love. His love has need of other beings beside Himself, in order to make them happy. He desires to have before Him beings in harmony with what He is, and He sets us before Him "holy and without blame."* This is what He is Himself, He who is the Holy One, He who certainly is without blame; for it is impossible to find any fault in Him. He calls Himself the Holy One; He is love! Well; He sets us holy and without blame before Him in love. Precious and most important thought for us! He has resolved that the church should be such that He could take delight in her, and behold in her before Him the reproduction of Himself, the most perfect happiness possible. He sets before Him beings like to Himself, in order to make them as happy as it is possible; He communicates to us His nature, and takes His delight in us. In order for that, He makes us "holy and without blame in love"; and these things are accomplished here below by the Spirit, though the effects are not fully shewn till above in the place of perfectness. So, where is our place even now below? Before Him; and this place is not a joy only, but the most precious thing that can be imagined, to be before Him!

We do not like to be before Him when we are not holy; but when the conscience is cleansed by the blood of Christ, we are truly happy before Him. In order that we may be happy before Him we must be holy, we must understand the tastes of the divine nature—our nature. We ourselves must find our happiness in being "holy and without blame in love." The apostle John shews in his first epistle (chap. 4 : 13), that the divine nature is produced in the Christian: the Christian has received God's own Spirit; it is a man who loves, and God is in him and he in God. What is granted is nothing less than the communication of the divine nature, by which we dwell in God, and God in us, "that we might be holy and without blame before him in love."

What we shall be above ought to be our aim here below, not as a task imposed, but as being made partakers of the

* The first of these words speaks of the character, the other rather of the conduct.

divine nature to the glory of God. Now if we would realise these things, our thoughts must be above, according to the nature of the grace which we have received. It is most strengthening for us to think of the things which are above—of their source, of Jesus, of the fulfilment of this purpose of God in glory.

Verses 5–7. The apostle has ever this adoption in view; God wills to have us for Himself before Him through Jesus, according to the good pleasure of His will, as His children. Now this is the glory of this grace which has placed us there. In these verses Paul speaks to us of the basis, of the means which God has employed, and on the certainty of which we can count. He speaks of it as a settled thing, as of a thing which we possess, and the possession of which, indeed, is necessary to us, in order that we may partake of all that of which he is about to speak to us.

This is the door by which we have come in; and having passed through the door, in Jesus, I have the certainty of being in the house. But it would be sorrowful to have Jesus only as the door, though it is precious to understand that. If we are not sure of a hearty welcome, and of the love of the Father, we depreciate the riches of His grace, for "we have redemption by his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," *v.* 7. If in uncertainty we do not enjoy this grace, we do not really acknowledge it; and in order to do so we must give ourselves up entirely to God, to the power of the love of Him who tells us to come inside. Here we may remark, that the Spirit, whilst declaring to us very plainly what is the means of our salvation, does not reason upon it as elsewhere, making known to us its character and its sufficiency; but He speaks of it as of a privilege that we possess; He tells us what we have in Christ, before shewing what belongs to those who enjoy the effect of this redemption. We have redemption; and instructed in all things, we wait for the redemption of the body, in order to enjoy it. The only thing that we have to do is to contemplate the riches of the grace of God; this will be a means of drawing us close to Him.

We have seen in the preceding verses the purposes of God with regard to us, and the means which He employs to render us partakers of them, namely, redemption through Christ's blood, according to the riches of His grace. Now what we

have before us is the portion we have now here below, the understanding of the mystery of God.

Verses 8, 9. God has given us of His grace in all wisdom and prudence. He is not content with only giving us this portion, by bringing us into it hereafter; but He wishes to give us now, here below, the knowledge of it in all wisdom and prudence, according to His good pleasure. We have not to do with a God who sets us before His justice, but with a God of grace who acts according to His own thoughts. God wills that the church should not be only such before Him, but that it should be also, here below, the depository of all His counsels; that it should have the understanding of the mystery of His will.

Verse 10 gives us the explanation of this mystery. God gathers together in one all things in Christ in the dispensation of the fulness of times. All that which preceded was preparatory; as the law, the prophets, etc. This verse speaks of the fulness of times, when God will arrange all things according to His mind, by setting Christ at the head of all things; and it is by being united to Him that we are made partakers of the inheritance. God acts of His own will to bring about what He wills. All shall be gathered together in one in Christ. It is by Him that all has been created, and by Him all is to be reconciled; and this is set forth here as the result of the counsels of God.

Verses 11, 12. There are two parts in this mystery: 1, all things shall be put under the headship of Christ; 2, the church, which is His body, will have part in the inheritance. We shall be before God according to the perfection of His nature. Christ having been put to death, God and the sinner have met together. But here it is rather a question of the accomplishment of the mystery of the will of God for the glory of Christ. The church will have part in the inheritance. "in whom," it is said, "we have obtained an inheritance"; but the whole of the mystery is not the church only, and this is very simple if we receive the thoughts of the Bible; not, indeed, that we shall understand the whole extent of the glory, but we shall see that all things created are to be gathered together in one in Christ.

In the Epistle to the Colossians Christ is presented as Creator; the Person of Christ is in the prominent place rather than the counsels of God as to the church. Christ is the first-born of every creature, and the first-born from the dead;

Head of His body, which is the church. But here, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, it is the privileges of the church in Him which we are given to know. In verse 6 it is said that what we possess already is to the praise of the glory of His grace; and in verse 12, where he is speaking of the glory to come that is before us, it is said—" that we should be to the praise of his glory" The church has a portion quite apart and most glorious. All things are to be gathered together in one in Christ. The church, being united to Him, is made partaker of the inheritance, that we should be to the praise of His glory. The glory of God is understood by its being seen in us; and the world will then see that we have been loved as Christ is loved.

Verse 12 might seem a difficulty, where it is said, " We who first hoped in Christ "; but he is here speaking of the Jews, who have believed before the revelation of Christ to the nation, at His second coming, and before the national call to the Jews at the end: such of the Jews as have believed, as have hoped beforehand, they are glorified with Him.

Verses 13, 14. Verse 13 is spoken to us; it is not only both Jews and Gentiles who will partake of this inheritance; but the church is given to know the will of God, by the gift of the Holy Spirit. This it is which distinguishes Christians who, having believed, are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit becomes a seal. We cannot receive the inheritance before Christ; the Spirit is given to us as earnest, whilst waiting for it. God sets His seal upon us, and this is a proof that a Gentile has part in the promises made to Abraham (for instance, Cornelius).

There is a difference between regeneration by the Spirit and the presence of the Spirit as a seal. A person must have believed, for God to be able to put His seal on him; the Spirit may act before this, as for instance, in breaking up the heart; but it is not as a seal. Sometimes the power of the Spirit produces fruits in us; at other times it humbles us, making us sensible of good and evil; but this is not joy. The fact is, that this work is even more precious than the joy itself, because there are sometimes things in us which are not judged before God on account of the very joy. When God has given us the enjoyment of the true object which we ought to enjoy, He begins to break up the heart in order that the work may be deeper. The Spirit makes us sensible of the things

which are not according to God, and this knowledge of one's self is necessary, in order that we may know God. I do not say that, if we were to walk exactly as God would have us, this work could not be carried on without the loss of the joy; but it is not generally so with the Christian. It becomes needful for God to turn us toward Himself, and to work inwardly, that we may discover what our carelessness has prevented us from seeing. Often this exhilarating joy of a Christian is found in one who has not judged things that ought to be judged in the presence of God. The wants and the desires which the Holy Spirit produces by regeneration are not the seal of the Spirit, any more than the joy which flows from the affections being occupied with a new and divine object, nor even the fruits which the Holy Spirit may produce when He dwells in us. The seal is the Holy Spirit Himself, given to that faith which is in Him who is our righteousness, and is the answer to all our wants; and then we have peace and joy. It is the Spirit in us who is the seal.

We ought not to be surprised, if we find it is the intention of God to shew us ourselves; at such times we do not see God, because He is making us see ourselves. Many persons think that the full and unwavering assurance of our salvation tends to make us careless as to the state of our souls; but this is a mistake. The Holy Spirit has set His throne in our hearts, and if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. It is He who makes us fully enjoy God, and who makes us judge what is not of God in us; who alone sets us in the truth, and gives us the assurance of what is accomplished for us. God in us, by His Spirit, judges the conduct and the heart; but this does not prevent this Spirit being the seal which God has set upon us, the witness of His perfect and unchangeable love towards us, the strength of a life of liberty, the Spirit of adoption. We partake of it with Jesus; God put His seal upon Jesus Himself when He was in this world, after His baptism by John.

The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. And here, let is be observed, that the Word, in the New Testament, always employs the word *us*, when it speaks of Christians and of the things which concern them. The prophets saw that the things which were revealed to them were not for them, but for us (see 1 Peter 1 : 11); the Holy Spirit always says *us*. The possession is not yet granted: the Spirit is the earnest of it.

The possession of the inheritance depends on the redemption of our body. As to our souls, we are united to the Heir even now; this is why we groan, all the while that we have the promises, because of this body, the redemption of which is not yet accomplished; and this redemption will take place at the resurrection. This is the enigma of the Christian; the Spirit gives him the certainty of his personal redemption, and this Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance. We shall be to the praise of His glory. Whilst waiting, the Spirit makes us sympathise with the groans of the creation; He helps our infirmities; working in us, He takes knowledge of the misery with which we are outwardly bound up, and He intercedes for us. The Spirit becomes the fountain of thoughts, the subjects of which are in heaven; and on the earth, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; Romans 5 : 5. The Spirit searches our hearts and presents our wants before God; Romans 8 : 26, 27. In verse 5 of this chapter God gives us a picture of the portion of a Christian. That which is important for us is the description of the person to whom these things belong.

Verse 15. There are two things to observe: 1, Christ was the object of the faith; 2, the saints were the object of the love. Christ being the object of faith, all those who are in Christ become also the objects of our love. The Holy Spirit dwells in the body (the church) as well as in the body of each Christian (1 Cor. 3 : 16; chap. 6 : 19); and He knows all the members of the body: when we can mount up to the privileges of the Christian, we embrace all the body. The flesh does not understand these privileges; but the Holy Spirit understands them; and the consequence of this knowledge will be love towards all the saints.

Verse 16. It is a happy thing when our prayers are givings of thanks: we realise, then, the certainty of our privileges. If we think of the wretchedness of the saints, we are overwhelmed by it; but if we think of what Christ is for the saints, we give thanks; we realise what God will do and does, for them and in them. God cannot be unfaithful to the love we have for all the saints; 1 Cor. 1 : 4. Paul could handle the sword of the Spirit; he would not have known how to deal with the Corinthians, if he had not begun by taking notice of the good which grace had wrought in them. How different is the Christian's way of acting, thinking, and judging, from the way of the world! There is not an expression

more remarkable than that which Paul in this verse makes use of in speaking to the Corinthians. Paul was determined to act according to the Spirit of God. It is not that God can make light of sin, and not judge it: no, He will judge it severely in the saints, if there be evil among them; but it is important for the church to handle it as God handles it.

Verse 17. We find here two names attached to God: 1, He is called the God of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer of chapter 3 is in relationship with the second of these titles, that of Father; that of the seventeenth and the following verses of this chapter, with that of God.

The apostle also presents before us God as the Father of glory, that is to say, as the source, morally and in power, of all true glory. At the same time he sets before us the Lord Jesus entering as man into relationship with God, a bond which causes all the affection of God to rest upon Him, as the object in whom all the divine thoughts centre: this is why Paul says, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory."

I can consider Christ as a glorified Man, whose right has been established by God over all things; this is what Peter does in his epistles; he looks at Christ as a Man whom God had regarded in this manner, having raised Him from the dead. John, on the contrary, sees Christ in the glory of His divine Person, one with the Father, and as the sent One. In our Epistle Christ is presented to us as the object of the counsels of God, in whom the power of God is displayed. It is precious for us to see what is our position in Christ, to see that we are placed, as being His body, in the same position as Himself. The counsels of God concerning Christ and His body, are what is contained in this Epistle.

The prayer which begins at this verse expresses the desire that we should enjoy the understanding which is given to us of the counsels of God, of the hope of His calling, of the riches of the glory of His inheritance in His saints, and the power which has placed us in this enjoyment.

Verses 18–23. The union of Christ with the church is a union so real, that the body must be there, in order for Christ to be complete. It is man in resurrection who occupies this place: and this doctrine is essentially practical; as it gives the whole power of God in a life of resurrection here below, which sets us above the flesh. If we do not realise this life,

we walk as men; and the lively understanding of this life of resurrection brings death upon all that is not heavenly. The power of faith makes us walk according to heavenly places; and it is nothing less than the power of God (the same power which raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at the right hand of God) which works in us both to will and to do. In these days the church has not miracles for its portion, but the power of the Spirit in the invisible world.

Herein is the understanding of the mystery of Christ. All things will be gathered together in one in Him; and, being united to Him, we likewise enjoy this inheritance. God redeems and inherits all things in Christ, and God establishes Christ the heir over all things as Man; but the church is the body of Christ, united to Him in the enjoyment of this inheritance; therefore it is said, " the inheritance of God in the saints."

In Christ all is manifested—in Christ the Son, Heir of all things; it is on Him that all hangs. But in the counsels of God, it is in us also that these things are manifested—in us, the saints; with whom God surrounds Himself in order to enjoy the fulness of His glory; as it is written, " to the glory of God by us."

But there still remains one thing essentially necessary to our enjoyment of this glorious destiny which belongs to us in the counsels of God; it was not only needful to reveal to us the counsels of God, but also to raise us to the height of that which is given to us by placing us in a position, in a state whereby we are made capable of this enjoyment. Christ is the Heir of all things, and we are His co-heirs. In what way are we associated with Him so as to share in the inheritance of the glory? How did He Himself (the One who in grace partook of the consequences of sin on the cross) become raised to enjoy the glory? God raised Him from the dead, and set Him according to His merits, and according to the dignity of His Person, at His own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. He has taken the Man who was dead, and has set Him at His right hand in the glory. Man, in the Person of Christ, is raised above all except the throne, by which He has been raised. And is He alone?—No. The same power which raised Christ, and set Him at the right hand of God; the excellent greatness of that power which raised

the Man who was dead to the right hand of God, works with the same might in him who believes.

This is what raises us to the capacity and to the position where we can enjoy, and where we do enjoy, the glory of God in Christ. For if God has set Christ over all, by taking Him from among the dead, He has given Him also as Head to His body, which is the church. We partake in this glory as being the body, the members of Him who inherits it; we partake of it according to the same energy which has set Christ there; Christ thus exalted is Head over all things, and Head of His body, which is the church. The members have their part in the inheritance, by virtue of the working of the same power in them, which wrought in Christ when He was taken from among the dead and set at the right hand of God. The body is complement to the Head; it is in this sense its fulness. Christ fills all in all: this is His glory. It is He who divinely fills the whole universe—the church is the body of Him who does it.

This great and wonderful truth is unfolded practically and morally in chapter 2. But before going farther, let us here remark, that there are two things in which the operation of the Holy Spirit is manifested in the church—these are wisdom and power; but the one is manifested at the present time more than the other. It is said, that Christ is *the wisdom* and *the power* of God. If you take the most advanced Christians, you will find in them more of wisdom and knowledge of the ways and counsels of God than of power. In the beginning of the church, the great mass of believers were less enlightened than at present; but the power was greater, for the demons trembled. Though this power is precious, inasmuch as it is a testimony that Jesus, as Man, has conquered Satan; yet the most precious thing is wisdom and so much the more, as what we have now to do is to discern the evil and separate from it, and not to establish a new dispensation. However, God always gives that which suits the need of His church.

And it is the same thing that we see in Joseph; first, when persecuted by his brethren; afterwards, when in Egypt. That which characterised him was his wisdom, his knowledge of the thoughts of God. This is what is now given to us, even the thoughts of God. The position of the church is known by spiritual understanding; by wisdom I know what is my portion in Christ; my affections are drawn towards what

God has presented to me for eternity. The church, in a special way, has need to understand this; she will then avoid the wiles of Satan. In Israel, when the enemies had the upper hand, it was knowing the thoughts of God which sustained those who were faithful. We see that the prophets of Judah, to whom God had entrusted His thoughts, did not perform a single miracle. Understanding of the thoughts of God will make us humble. It is a lowly position to know that we have nothing but what is in God. The effect spiritually will be to turn our hearts towards Him who is our portion; and this will draw the church away from all that is of the world; because God is about to take her up out of the world, this will force her to find her sources of joy and strength only in Him. Here, however, there is a character of power attached to such knowledge. It is the power of the resurrection which places us in the same position as Christ in heaven. That is our position, if we have spiritual intelligence: how power and wisdom are united! It is a work of power in us, and not our own wisdom.

CHAPTER 2.

Verses 1–3. The Gentiles were by sin morally there where Christ actually and outwardly placed Himself for sin; they were dead in their trespasses and in their sins. There they were walking according to the course of this world, floating with the stream according to the powerful and universal influence of Satan, who penetrates everywhere and reigns over everything, like the air, which is his seat; they were walking according to this spirit which is now working in the children of disobedience, in those who still continue far off from the deliverance wrought by the Lord.

But was it only for the Gentiles? Far from it; the apostle tells us, "we also," Jews, we were walking in the same lusts; and by consequence, according to the moral truth of our nature, we were, says he, children of wrath—heirs by nature of the wrath of that God who could not mix Himself up with sin. All were children of wrath. It was their desert, according to their nature, which was opposed to God.

Verses 4–7. The apostle has shewn where all men were; he has done away with all distinction, by shewing what the nature was which was common to them all; and has reduced all men to the same ground, by bringing down the Jews through

the lusts of the flesh to the same level morally as the Gentile, whom the Jew despised. Such was man in himself, Jew or Gentile. But God who is rich in mercy, when we (for all, Jew or Gentile, are now taken together) were dead in our trespasses and in our sins, has quickened us together with Christ. If the sin of their common nature united them all in the same position before God, His grace has set them with Christ, quickened together with Him, and thus together also as to one another. The resurrection unites in one for blessing those whom sin had really put far off from God. Thus God had raised up together, and made sit together in the heavenly places in Christ, believers from among either the Jews or the Gentiles. Thus the church enjoyed the fulness of blessedness in Christ, according to the power of the resurrection and the ascension by which God had set Christ at His right hand in heaven. Sin united sinners down here in one common misery; grace has raised them to one peculiar and common glory, according to the power which had raised up Christ to this glory from the grave.

But if children of wrath, if thieves and Mary Magdalenes are found in the same glory as that conferred on the Son of God as the reward of His service here below; if even we ourselves are found participating in it, it is in order that God may shew in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us by Christ Jesus. When angels and principalities see a poor sinner and the whole church in the same glory as the Son of God, they will understand, as much as it is possible for them to understand of, the exceeding riches of the grace which has set us there.

Verses 8, 9. All is the gift of God. It was not even through works that we had part in this glorious salvation, but by faith, and this again the gift of God, that no man might boast. The glory of such a grace must all turn back again to God. He will make us understand that we are, indeed, blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. What could we have more than to partake in the glory and the inheritance of Christ Himself, according to the power which has set Him there? So we see that the portion and position of the church are heavenly. It is inasmuch as dead and risen with Christ from the dead, that she enjoys all His privileges. It is there above that she enjoys them. She is heavenly by the very fact of her existence.

Verses 10, 11. The Spirit presents to us another aspect of this work in contrast with the thought of any labour on our part, in order to obtain this glory. We are, inasmuch as we partake of that, *His work*, created by God. The works of man are excluded from it; ourselves are His workmanship. Is it then that works are left, and by the Christian? No: they have their place; we are created for good works which God has before prepared (for all is of Him), that we should walk in them. They are not the works of the law, that the man which does them should live by them; but God, having created in us this new and heavenly nature, had before prepared works—a walk suitable to them. The consequence of this work of Christ is, not only that we are created anew for this heavenly position: but, moreover, it sets us here below in order to make manifest His power. These two great blessings flow from our being considered by God, as being really *the body* of Christ; that is to say, that we are possessors of the same glory there above, and that we are the dwelling of God here below. The church will be the fulness of Christ in glory, when all things will be subjected to Him; while waiting for it she ought to manifest the power of Christ in this world.

Such is then the order, the ensemble, and the effect of this work of power wrought out by grace, according to the rich mercy of God, which has set us in the heavenly places in Christ, as the body of Christ; the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; for it is no longer question of Jew or Gentile, but of spiritual blessings for those who are quickened and raised up together with Christ, according to the exceeding riches of that grace which has set the sinner in the same glory as the Son of God. What ought we not to be, since we have been made partakers of such privileges; and that according to this great love with which God has loved us?

Verse 12. The Israelites were as far off from God morally; but as to their position they were not without God in the world; God was there, the covenant was there, as also the promises; whilst the Gentiles had nothing. The Gentiles were far off from God: outside the pale of the Jews, there was no way for them to draw near to God in a way that would be pleasing to Him; they were altogether separated from Him. We see, however, through the history of the Jews, that in after times God intended to act otherwise; several signs, obscure

certainly, shewed that God had another thought, as Rahab and others serve for examples.

Verses 13–16. The blood of Christ does away all difference between those who were far off and those who were nigh. It is evident that the Jews, having put to death the Messiah, had destroyed every link between themselves and God: the middle wall of partition was broken down. They were like the nations, and more guilty than they. All that had belonged to them was entirely destroyed, and set aside by the death of Christ. That which had made the distinction of the Jew consisted in the ordinances by excluding the Gentiles who had no part in them. Now there is no longer need to know whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, for we see in verse 15 that the end of God is to take Jews and Gentiles in order to make one body of both. He has broken down the middle wall of partition, and wishes to form not the commonwealth of Israel again, but a new body in His presence, taken from either by the cross. It is evident that he who approaches to God by the cross has done with the Jewish ground. The apostle insists upon this point, that God, having laid this foundation in Christ, means to have but one body before Him; and then he shews how this is accomplished here below. If I draw near to God through the blood of Christ, I am a member of His body.

Verse 17. God had made peace, through the blood of Christ, between Jews and Gentiles, by reconciling them both to Himself by the cross; it is a new thing, a new man in Christ, in Jesus Himself. The apostle says it is the cross which has done it, by breaking down the middle wall of partition; and this oneness was established in principle, the moment Christ died. It is the cross which has done it; all difference is destroyed. The uppermost thought with God was to gather together in one, one glorious body in His presence; but in order to do so He must make peace and break down the middle wall of partition; this is what was done by the cross of Christ. It is remarkable that it should be said that it is Christ who came to bring us peace, for it is not His spirit but Himself who brings us peace, this peace which is before God, which is accomplished. It is by Him that we have the enjoyment of it. Christ does not only produce good results in us; but He brings to us the good news of the peace which is made, and He brings it with Himself. "He came and preached

peace to them which were afar off, and peace to them which were nigh."

Verse 18. In this verse we see what is the way in which we draw nigh to God, the order of the Spirit in the heart being the inverse of that of grace. The Father acts by the Son, the Son in us by the Spirit, and as we now have the Spirit, it is by the Son that we address the Father. I cannot pray to God without the truth of the Trinity being manifested; it is not an abstract doctrine, but enters into the practical relationships of every day. Now it is the Spirit which makes the unity, there where He works, being the bond of the oneness of the body. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers."

Verses 19, 20. It is necessary to observe that the prophets here spoken of are not the prophets of the Old Testament, but those of the New. Paul speaks of the apostles and prophets as forming the foundation. The question here is as to building upon it, not as to laying the foundation. The church is not built upon the prophets of the Old Testament; it is built since the death of the Lord Jesus, and the foundation on which it is built is Christ who was crucified. All the Jewish ordinances barred the way against those who were not of Israel; the Jews had cast themselves away by putting Christ to death. The veil was rent: till then, God's foundation had not been laid, the first stone of the church was not placed. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saw the promises afar off; they had believed and embraced them, and they will be in the heavenly glory; but the church had not then begun upon earth. It is upon earth that all has taken place: sin entered there, temptation also; the law too was given upon earth; Christ came into this world, the Holy Spirit also. By the Holy Spirit we can enter in within the veil; now that the foundation is laid (that is to say, since the death of Christ), the Holy Spirit, who makes us able to enter, has been given to us. If we leave that, all is confusion, the church has no distinctive feature, nothing which distinguishes it.

The word "prophets" of verse 20 has led many into a mistake. Here it is quite a new revelation that is spoken of, one which could not be spoken of before. It was a hidden mystery. God could not reveal the church during the Jewish dispensation; for the existence of the church then would have denied the special position of this people Israel. God could reveal that the Jews would be rejected and punished, and from

the moment He brings out that, He turns back to the mercy which will cause the Jewish nation to return into blessing. This is what will take place when the Jewish people will be the royal people upon earth, when Israel will be restored by a new covenant. But this new man, this new revelation, is that those who now believe and belong to Christ become members of His body; and they are in the blessedness which belongs to it. Verse 19 expresses that we are in the house of God; and from verse 20 it is evident that, in order to begin to build, the corner stone must be laid. This is what we have seen before, and now we come to the results of it. Verse 21. We are not yet the temple of God; the church will be that holy temple in glory.

Verse 22 describes what we are now; we are the habitation, the tabernacle, where God dwells by His Spirit, as of old, in the midst of the camp of Israel; hereafter we shall be a glorious temple. Whilst waiting, we are the habitation, the dwelling of God. The blessedness of the church flows out of that nearness. If we have the consciousness that we are the habitation of God, how can we defile the tabernacle? There is not a blessing more important than this; it is even higher than those which relate to our inheritance in the glory.

When the apostle has spoken of God dwelling in us by the Spirit, he prays that we may be filled with all the fulness of God; and there are here two things to remark: 1, the glory to come, and the church having part in this glory; 2, the habitation of God in us being united to Christ, we are the habitation of God by the Spirit. It is our present position: we have what is most blessed in this position. If we grieve the Spirit, we dishonour God who dwells in us: God then cannot act. When Satan by means of error has got entrance into any part, the church is troubled on every side. It is this power of Satan which has invaded the church of Rome. How precious it is that we should be the habitation of God, and how solemn a thing it is to have such a God in the midst of us! From the moment that there was an Achan in the camp, God could not act, He could not go forward; Israel was beaten because God was there. It is the same with the church of God; and if we forget it, God does not forget it. It is a precious thing to remember that, though we are in wretchedness, God is with us; as it is said in Haggai 2 : 4, when the Jews began to build, " Be of good courage, for I am with

you " : whatever be your state of ruin, I am with you ; My Spirit is with you as in the day that I caused you to come up out of Egypt. There is nothing but faith which can reconcile these two things—wretchedness and the love of God.

CHAPTER 3.

Verses 1–6. The apostle had set forth in the preceding chapters the hope of glory and the oneness of the body of Christ ; he had presented the Spirit given as the seal and earnest of the glory, the Spirit as the centre of the oneness ; and while we wait for this glory, he has presented the church, not only as the co-heir of this glory in hope, but as being the habitation of God by the Spirit during the present time. Paul, in these two chapters, shews us first the glory with Christ ; and afterwards the church, the bride of Christ and habitation of God by the Spirit.

Now, introducing the Gentiles into the oneness of the body, the apostle says, " I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." All that follows from verse 1 to the end of the chapter is in parenthesis, as is seen by chapter 4 : 1, " I, therefore, the prisoner." What is said at the beginning of chapter 4 is connected with the end of chapter 2, where it is seen that we are the habitation of God, the dwelling of God ; this is the calling of which it is said, " I beseech you . . . to walk worthy of the calling with which ye are called." In such a position we are always humble ; and this it is which enables us to walk worthy of the calling revealed.

At the beginning of the chapter there are two things to observe : personal humility which leads us to walk in oneness ; and the individual gifts. There is one body, one Spirit, and the gifts alone are different in the members of the body. Chapter 3 is an unfolding of this truth, that the Holy Spirit dwells in His habitation, which is the church. Paul says, " I, Paul, prisoner for you Gentiles," etc. ; and the consequence was, that since, as to the church, Paul would not place the Jews above the Gentiles, by reason of the malice of this people he became prisoner for the love of the Gentiles ; here is the testimony which Paul gives about it. " That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." It is wonderful how slow Christians are to understand the largeness of the counsels

of God; for Paul was obliged to say even to the Ephesians, who were certainly a blessed church, if they had the understanding of the ways of God as to him, Paul; "If so be ye have heard."

In general we are obliged to be much more occupied with the details of the Christian life than with the great principles of this life. God is patient; but it is sorrowful that the state of the church should be such. Because of the want of spirituality, the Spirit cannot go on to unfold the riches of the thoughts of Jesus; He is then forced to be occupied with the walk, that the gospel may not be dishonoured. The understanding of the counsels of God depends on the faithfulness of the walk, and what will be the consequence of this faithful walk? It will be a state of struggle with all, especially with all that Judaises. It is impossible but that, in the actual state in which the world is, opposition should not be shewn against the one who is faithful; and the fact of having more light excites opposition even with Christians. Paul is a striking example of it.

The apostle often repeats this; that the church has not been revealed in the Old Testament. Certainly, the prophets of the Old Testament confirm the blessed position of the church, inasmuch as this truth is based upon the blessing of God being extended even to the nations blessing which they (the prophets) had testified of. (Psalm 18 : 49; Deut. 32 : 43; Psalm 117.) There it is the Gentiles who are to rejoice with His people; but what the church is, is never spoken of. In the Colossians it is said of Christ, "Christ the hope of glory"; whilst that Christ whom the Jews expected was to be a Christ personally present—a Christ who was to bring in the glory (this will take place at the end)—so that a Christ who was only a hope when He was there was a thing which could not be understood. It was a mystery, of which the prophets had never said a word: they had spoken of a Christ who was to accomplish such or such things, but never of a Christ in us the hope of glory for the church. Christ as in us is the practical and actual point of this mystery.

In Romans 16 : 26* the apostle teaches the same truth, that

* I do not doubt but that in this passage the "prophetic writings" are those of the New Testament; but the apostle constantly makes use of the writings of the Old Testament, to shew grace extending to the Gentiles.

the church was a mystery, unknown before the death of Christ. God had always had the thought of the church; but it was hidden. Paul, in his communications to the Gentiles, rests upon what the prophets had said of the grace of God towards the Gentiles, and he quotes these prophets; Romans 15 : 9–12. It is certain that a Christ promised, and who was to be rejected, is clearly revealed in the prophets; but we know that this was an enigma for the Jews—"We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever"—and the thought of a Christ who had other members, and those too among the Gentiles, would have been still more incomprehensible. The church is united to Christ; and if we wish to find it in the Old Testament, we must seek Christ Himself, and see it in Him. See, for example, Isaiah 50 : 8: "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?" and Romans 8 : 32, 33.

This challenge to all the world (because it is God who justifies us), which in Isaiah is spoken by Christ Himself, is in the Romans applied to the church. God only sees Christ; and these things are applied to us as being united to Christ. We are accepted in the Beloved. The thought of a people united to Christ by a spiritual life, or rather of a people united to Christ by one Spirit who was in Him and them, was never touched upon in the Old Testament. Christ Himself had not this position as Head of the body; and consequently the Spirit was not yet thus given.

The apostles and prophets, the foundation upon which the church is built, are not the prophets of old; for we see here it is things now revealed to these prophets that are spoken of, in contrast with the times past; they are then the prophets of the New Testament. In 1 Peter 1 : 12 it is written, that the ancient prophets knew it was not for them that these things were written; and verse 6 of this chapter explains to us this mystery, namely, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs. It declares to us the good news, that the middle wall of partition was broken down by the death of Christ; that all that which had made the difference between Jews and Gentiles had disappeared, and that Jews and Gentiles were made one in Christ. We see the difficulty the apostle Peter had in admitting this truth (for example, with Cornelius); Paul was obliged

to resist him at Antioch to the face. The ancient Jews had great difficulty in acknowledging this glorious truth, and the oneness of the church.

Verses 7, 8. The apostle, seeing the excellency of that which had been given to him, sees himself less than the least of all saints; and it ought to be the same with us. The sight of these excellent things lessens us in our own eyes; and this humility will be the consequence of the realisation of our privileges. What a glorious testimony that all distinction should be done away! Jew and Gentile—all that belongs to man falls when in the presence of the counsels of God in Christ. Paul, while contemplating these counsels, saw that he was nothing. The name Gentiles expresses that all was grace. The promise made when the first Adam had sinned is a promise made to the second Man: the last Adam will bruise the serpent's head.

The unsearchable riches of Christ are those riches of which we cannot fathom the depth, so immense are they; and the glory which God will give to Christ, according to what He is, and according to the worth of His work, this is the measure of these unsearchable riches. All has been done by Christ and for Christ; all has been created by Him and for Him: and the fact of having presented Christ to the Gentiles outside the limited revelation of the ancient prophets, brought out the riches of Christ as unsearchable; God can stand in presence of the power of sin, and in Christ, as Man, display the power of His grace for the manifestation of His glory.

Verses 9–11. These are the counsels of God in Christ, and the position of the church; never before had such wisdom been seen. Man might have been struck with wisdom in the creation; with the interposition of God in the deluge; Noah kept; Abraham called; the law given; other wonders accomplished; the government of God over His Jewish people. In all these, the wisdom of God was manifested; but here is a wisdom altogether different. A heavenly church was not even known to angels.

The Jewish people having rejected the Messiah, God's plan as to the earth was suspended; a new thought is brought in; a people whose position is after such sort that they have no place whatsoever save in heaven. Now God does not punish according to a rule distinctly revealed to man; there is no immediate government of God upon earth, though He

still acts in providence; but there is a people, in suffering it may be, but heavenly, in the midst of the world. God's ways are of a new kind.

It is striking to see what is now the position of the church set in sight of heaven; it is in the heavenly places she bears witness; her conflicts (Eph. 6) are in the heavens; her blessings are there also (Eph. 1); and it is there again that she is seated (Eph. 2); the witness borne by the church in the heavenly places, gives importance to the present testimony of the church down here. I do not here speak in thought of the glory to come; but in thought of God's dwelling in the church by the Spirit.

Christ came—He was rejected; quite another wisdom was then manifested. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be heirs in the glory; but they have not been gathered together in one body in Christ like the Gentiles, according to the purpose of God before the world began. The fact of our election before the world was, adds nothing to the sovereignty of God; if God had elected us in time, His sovereignty would have been the same; but election before time—before the world was, shews that the church is NOT of the world, since she was before the foundation of the world in the counsels of God. Neither the position of the church, nor her life, hang upon anything in this world; the world is but the sphere through which she moves.

Verse 12. This verse is the practical consequence of what has preceded. This position being based upon the love and upon the work of Christ, we are before God with a good conscience; with a conscience perfected for ever. I am in Jesus, in the presence of God, by the faith that I have in Him—that is Jesus. Certainly, if I grieve the Spirit, the Spirit will be in me a Spirit of reproof; but Christ has finished all. The work which He has done, is perfectly finished according to the thoughts of God, and He is in God's presence according to the efficiency of these thoughts and of this work.

Verse 13. The apostle begins his address to the Gentiles by saying, "I desire that ye faint not. . . ." In how high a position were the Gentiles placed! Instead of being troubled in seeing the afflictions of Paul, they were to be strengthened by these means; for it was for their sake that Paul suffered as a witness of the privileges which God vouchsafed to them; because he thought of them. The effect of ignominy in the

world is to discourage those who are following it more or less ; but he who is faithful, like Moses, esteems that the reproach of Christ is better than all the treasures of Egypt, for it is our glory. God might have been pleased to be satisfied with Jews ; but He wished also for Gentiles.

Verse 14. This prayer is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; it hangs on that intimate relationship between the Father and the Son into which we are brought. At the beginning of the epistle there is a prayer of quite a different character ; and which is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 15. This verse includes the whole of intelligent creation, blessed before God ; it embraces all the different races, Jews and Gentiles ; not only God gathers the Jews in one as He did under the name of God, but, under the name of Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He gathers in one all the nations dispersed at Babel, and all the hosts of heaven. The Lord Jesus has received, as Man, power over all men ; the angels even will be subjected to Him as Son of the Father ; therefore it is said, " Let all the angels of God worship him! "

Verses 16, 17. It is more than glory that is spoken of here ; it is the fulness of the riches of His glory. This is what the apostle desires for them, in contrast with a Messiah in the midst of the people : " That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Christ, set in glory, brings the Gentiles into it, and this is how we have part in these riches ; but in order to enjoy them, He must dwell in our hearts. The moment that God exalted Christ, the link with every family in heaven and on the earth was manifested and even formed, for it was new. The portion of the Gentiles, as well as the whole church, is to be united to Christ Himself, of whom every family is named (*v.* 15) ; He is the Head of the church, the manifest centre of the glory of God. The apostle desires that the efficacy of this power should be in us ; not only that grace which comforts and which is most precious, but likewise that we should realise Christ exalted.

As Son of God, Christ is the first name in this family which the Spirit reveals to us, that Spirit by whom we are strengthened in the inner man ; for our feeble hearts, though they are converted to God, would be incapable without His help of entering into this glory and the extent of these counsels ; the trials of the flesh are not an obstacle to our realising these

things; the more the apostle suffered as prisoner, the more he entered into this mystery of the glory of Christ. His imprisonment was the cause of this epistle, as well as those to the Colossians, Philippians, and others: it is thus that God provides for the needs of His church. We ought so to lay hold of Christ glorified, as that He should be there with us; His presence ought to be realised and acted on constantly in the heart.

Verse 18. The thought from the beginning of the epistle is not of Christ as making satisfaction to the justice of God; but that power, that flow of love for the accomplishing certain counsels of grace, of which He is the fulness for us. Then Paul desires that having understood the accomplishment of this thought in the Person of Christ, we should understand the power of this mighty love which has glorified Christ by linking His glory with the blessing of poor sinners. When we apprehend these things, we understand that all is love, and that we ought to live upon the love which has done all.

It is by entering into the love which is the source of it, that we understand the immeasurable expanse which is spoken of in verse 18; that love of God whose thought is to put all things in subjection to Christ, and to glorify the church with Him. When we have understood this love, we can, in a certain sense, measure the ways of God which have brought us in there where God displays Himself, for it is not told us of what he is describing the length, the breadth, the depth and height, but it is love which has introduced us and orders all things. The Spirit includes the whole church, which is very nigh to God in this glory; it is impossible that any of its members should be set aside.

Verse 19. What is said here is specially for us. The apostle desires that we should realise the love of Christ, which passes knowledge; and that we should be strengthened to understand this love and to be rooted in Him, in order that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. If I am placed in the midst of infinity, I am not at the end of this infinity; I am in infinity which I do not comprehend, which I do not measure, and I have no smaller measure than that: it is nothing less than the fulness of God. God fills all in all, and I am full of Him, and all this by the Spirit; whatever be my littleness, I am in this blessed position. The Jews had no idea of this relationship which is named in heaven and on earth; but as for us, we

cannot go outside this wall of enclosure with which God has surrounded us, and which is God Himself; and this depends on the presence of the Spirit, making the church the habitation of God. God cannot be less than Himself; He does not cease to be Himself. The Spirit dwells in the church; she becomes the vessel of that which nothing can contain.

Verse 20. Sometimes when we ask that God would grant us more than we can ask or think, they are blessings outside us which we desire; but here it is blessings in us, it is the power of the Spirit in the church. This it is which sets the church in the height of her position, and makes us feel our littleness.

Verse 21. What is said here does not relate to the fulness of the glory to come. The hope hangs on it; nevertheless, it is not the hope here which is in question, but the realisation of the inner man, the habitation of God as a present, real thing. The essential thing exists already; and it is that which is most intimate and most exalted, namely, to be filled with the fulness of God; Christ who has finished all is there, the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. Paul sees in this verse all the extent of the counsels of God.

It is comforting for us, that this realisation of the inner man should be wrought out by a power which works in us in the midst of the weakness of the vessel, because it is the will of God. What we have to desire is to be strengthened in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we may seek the glory of Christ in the church, and that all glory should be attributed to Him, if so be we have understood that it belongs to Him. If it be asked, "Is the glory of Christ in the church?" we hardly know how to answer. God grant us to desire this glory!

CHAPTER 4.

We have here the present and practical application of the principles which form the subject of this epistle. The beginning of this chapter joins on to the end of chapter 2, where is shewn to us what the calling of the Christian is. The apostle beseeches the Ephesians to walk worthy of this vocation. That which is its special mark is, the habitation of God on earth by the Spirit. The whole conduct of the Christian flows from the church being the habitation of the Spirit. When the

Spirit is presented as the seal, this is more for the individual: it is not the church which is sealed, but she becomes the habitation of God, as does the individual also. The conduct of the Christian ought to flow out of the presence of God. There is a conduct which becomes this presence: not only ought I to obey God, but there is a manner of acting which flows out of this presence, and which is the expression of this dwelling of God in us. When God was in the temple there was something in particular which was suitable for that presence. We are His temple. The presence of the Spirit in us becomes power as much as motive. There are things which become the temple of God. The estimation that we form of one another depends on the same thing.

Verses 1–3. The apostle does not speak of obedience, but of the Spirit which leads to it; the practical effect of the presence of God by the Spirit, is humility. Love always makes itself nothing. To have bad thoughts about oneself is humiliation, but not humility. Humility is produced by the presence of God; we are occupied with God and not with ourselves; God is there to comfort us and to bless us; the pride of man being broken down there is gentleness. This making nothing of oneself produces patience and love. When we know ourselves to be nothing, we have the consciousness of the strength of God; and more than that, there is the activity of love.

Consciousness of the preciousness of the presence of God, gives us the energy of the Spirit of God, which makes us careful to keep the oneness of the Spirit, that is to say, the union of all the members of Christ as one temple in which God dwells in this world by His Spirit. The moment that I forsake this, the unity is broken. In the flesh we are two, in the Spirit we are one; and when, by the Spirit, we enjoy love, there is this desire to keep the oneness of the Spirit. The flesh is never peaceful, whereas in God all is peace and quietness.

It is remarkable how often God is called the God of peace. See Phil. 4 : 9; 1 Thess. 5 : 23; Heb. 13 : 20. The bond of peace is indeed the result of being thus in the presence of God; it is on this account that the apostle adds, "There is one body and there is one Spirit." Oneness is a thing which is actually realised on earth, the outward unity of the body in one expresses what there is within. If this bond of peace is wanting, the oneness of the Spirit is not kept.

Verse 4. Paul turns back to the thought put forth in

chapter 1, "The hope of glory." This same Spirit which has given the same hope, has given the oneness of the body; this outward unity which manifests the Spirit as well as oneness in the glory. There is but one body here below.

Verse 5. This verse describes the circumstances belonging to this oneness—all its interior and exterior relationships. It speaks of baptism as being the expression of the common faith.

Verse 6. The apostle adds, "in you all." One God and Father in us all; that is, His abode in us. "Through all," expresses the thought that He is everywhere in us all; He dwells there; He is there in His power, identifying Himself with His own. Spiritually He is in us, and as Ruler He is everywhere. They who are partakers of this oneness, are united to Christ as Christ is to the Father; thus the Father is in us all. (See John 14 : 20.) What a bond in this new creation! God Himself dwelling in us, in a body of weakness and of death! This is why we groan, being of the present creation, while at the same time we have the firstfruits of the Spirit; we groan according to God, not only because of the misery which we feel as men, but according to God who will very soon deliver this world.

Verse 7. The apostle now comes to the members of this wonderful body; Christ is the power which unites this body to Himself, and He is also the energy in each one of its members. If I speak of the church as a body, there is more glory; the unity of the body connects itself with nearness to God rather than with our individuality. We ought to look upon the members of the body as in action for the good of this body; evangelisation produces also this same end by bringing souls to the Lord.

Verse 8. It is the same expression as is employed (Judges 5 : 12) when Barak returned from delivering the captives of Israel, leading captive those who had led them captive. The people of God were captives of Satan; Christ has triumphed over Satan, and has led him captive, and has brought along with Him the church delivered from his chains. Satan was the master, and Christ gains the victory over the strong man and delivers the church. Having delivered it from the power of Satan, He can communicate to us this same power which gains the victory over Satan. God has set this power of victory in man, in order that it may energise. Christ had the title, and when He shall return, even those who are not converted

will be delivered, because Satan will be bound; but now he is not so. The church is the place of the manifestation of the Spirit for the destruction of the power of Satan; and this shews the importance of the presence of the Spirit in the body, presence which delivers us from the power of Satan, and makes us grow up into all that which is of the Head, even Christ. In Psalm 68 these gifts are also spoken of in connection with the Jews, when Israel will be re-established in glory; but Paul here makes no mention of the second part of the verse, omitting, "Yea, for the rebellious also," because in the Ephesians all distinction is at an end, and has come to an end in the church. Now it is the whole connection in heaven and on earth; now it is gifts for men; the Jews were "the rebellious" (technical expression for the Jews); but hereafter they will be so no longer, and the Lord God will dwell among them.

Verse 9. This verse sets before us the glory of the Person of Christ, who has gone up on high in order that to faith there should be between God Himself and the power of death nothing which is not filled to faith with the power of redemption. The believer on earth is placed in this power of redemption, finding Christ everywhere. Christ having descended into hades, God has set Him at His right hand in order that He should fill all things. We see by this what will be the perfection of this work when all things will be reconciled by Christ. What an infinitely important position is that of the church, as the body and depository of the power of Christ! How little does she correspond to it!

Verse 10. We have seen how Christ has come, then ascended up again, and who will hereafter reconcile all things. In the meanwhile, inasmuch as He is head of the body, He gives these gifts for the accomplishment of this special part of the mystery, namely, the edifying of His body; and it is of this part especially that mention is here made. God has desired to make us know what is the final end, the union of all things in Christ, and that of the body with Him. This great end is the position of the church as the centre of the glory; and Christ now employs the power with which He is filled for the edifying of this body. The consequence of this is, that He speaks of its members which serve for the edifying of this body, and of its members, which make it move and act. It is not then miracles, testimony of power borne to the world,

which are here spoken of, but the joints of the body, in order that it may grow up into Him.

Verse 11. Paul is not speaking of gifts, but of those who were themselves these gifts; he speaks of the gifts which edify the body, and not here of the Spirit distributing these gifts according to His will: Christ filling all things we are His members, partakers of this blessing. This is the difference between what is taught in 1 Corinthians 14 and in this chapter.

Verses 12, 13. There is a difficulty which connects itself with this, namely, the duration of these gifts; we might have thought they should have been continued till the perfecting of the body of Christ. In order to be able to apprehend the part of this passage in which this difficulty is, we must enter into the state of the church. The Lord did not return immediately; in the epistles He is always represented as about to return immediately; this is why Paul looked at all the saints in the presence of His coming. He looked at the perfecting of the body for the return of Christ as a thing to be accomplished in the present time. We know that this has not taken place; John 21 : 22. But in truth the Lord cannot be untrue to the edification of His body; and here the question is not about the manifestation of the Spirit in power, but the communication of blessings on the part of the head by means of its members.

The apostles and the prophets served as foundation, we can perceive this; and the others remained for building up even after these had departed. The ministrations which have lasted are those of evangelists, pastors, and teachers. What is said in the first place in verse 12 is the general and proper end of the gifts. Then follows the manner in which this grace, which flows from the Head, for the perfecting of the saints, ought to act: it is by producing a ministry which is to work in building up the body: an evident proof that ministry is to last until we are all brought into the presence of Christ, and that this is brought about by the principle of the oneness of the body and by its edification as such. It is then important to see the end of this ministry.

Verse 13 speaks of the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God—in the which we have fellowship. Difference of views there may be; but as it was said to the Philippians, " God shall reveal even this unto you." There is, therefore, the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Ministry is the means to it, and this ministry

power of Christ, we ought to offer ourselves up to God; Rom. 12 : 1. It should also be remarked, that that which descends from God in love re-ascends always to God in love and devotedness to Him. What a blessed thought; and why do we not thus live? for this is what we ought to be in our service for God.

Verse 3. Paul supposes the Christian in that atmosphere of God, in which there are no thoughts but those becoming saints. And we see here the place which money holds: the heart of man thinks that it is pleasanter to be rich than poor; but here it is said that covetousness should not be so much as named among us. We see also to what extent, when in the presence of God, the standard of morality is different from what it would be if we only had regard to men. The apostle considers these things according to the Spirit of God, according to the thoughts of God, according to Christ working in him, Paul. The consequence of this is, that it is according to what becomes saints that we ought to act; we are to be followers of God.

Verse 4. In the presence of Christ we shall find jesting unsuitable. It is not that he who walks in the light of God's countenance is not happy. There is not a cloud on the joy of him who is in the presence of God; but such a Christian feels what the things are which do not become him who is called to imitate God. That the world should find such things suitable is natural enough: but "as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool; this also is vanity," Eccles. 7 : 6.

Verses 5–7. A covetous person shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The covetous person in 1 Corinthians 5, is placed, as to discipline, in the same position as fornicators, idolaters, etc.; but it is more difficult to act towards a covetous person, because with him the sin is more hidden than seen outside. All these things are the flesh; but for him who walks after the Spirit they are judged. The natural man would rather have two crown-pieces than one; but the new nature is delivered from such lust, it finds not in such things its enjoyment. The apostle says here "The kingdom of God and of Christ." He follows the thoughts which are according to God and to Christ. If I think of God, it is divine light; if of Christ, it is this power manifested in a man. How precious for us to be able to say, It is there where I am, associated with

them ; I am in the same atmosphere as God and Christ. It is, then, in this position that we judge all things. We ought not to associate with that which is not of God, because God is not there, and because we should no longer be in the atmosphere in which we are able to judge of things.

Verse 8. It is thence that you have come out, says the apostle. It is not said " in darkness," but that those who are now partakers of the divine nature had been darkness ; but now ye are light. It is the nature of God, of which we have been made partakers, which makes us see all ; and it is thus that we are light in the Lord. Just in so far as we are in Jesus, it is thus that we walk. He that followeth Me, Jesus says, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life ; but he that walketh in the night stumbleth, because there is no light in him. The natural man has no light.

Verse 9. The nature of God and of Christ, when it is manifested in man here below, has for its character gentleness, meekness, practical righteousness, and truth. In the truth, each thought has its place before God : Christ was the truth. Each one of His acts answered to what He Himself was, and to what God Himself was ; either He was manifesting God or He was, as man, truth before Him. Each of my actions ought to answer to what I am before God : it is the subjection of the inner man. I ought to consider others in all my relationships with them, according to this righteousness and this truth (that is, according to what one is before God), and there there is neither unrighteousness nor untruthfulness.

Verse 10. This verse is connected with what is said about light in verse 8 ; verse 9 is in parentheses. This is what we have to learn in our conduct. It is often said, that it is difficult to discover the will of God ; but this is because we are not ready to meet with difficulties, and then we cannot find out His will. In this verse we have that moral state of soul which loves to please, which realises the spirit of the walk, and which realises the wishes of God in order to be acceptable to Him ; it is thus that, as children, we shew real thoughtfulness about Him whom we desire to please. In verse 9 it is the fruits which are the natural productions of the life of God in us that are enumerated ; but in verse 10 it is the manner in which God works in us, our eyes being turned upon another than ourselves. This work of God in us is thus carried on. A child, while observing his father, learns what is pleasing to

anger lasts, then there is bitterness, and the soul not being able to return into its rest, evil is shewn to be there ; for this reason it is said, " Let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

Verse 27. This verse shews us that we ought not to open the door to Satan. If it is the flesh that is acting, then the wicked one can touch us ; but he cannot touch the new man, he cannot entice it ; 1 John 5 : 18. If I give way to a thought which is not of God, then I give place to Satan ; if I give way to anger, the enemy is there : we are then hindered in service, troubled in prayer ; and that is not to be wondered at. When our thoughts have been filled with present things, when we have been occupied with them not in their connection with God, we have given place to Satan ; but if we have been occupied with our work with God before us, then this work in no way takes possession of our hearts as an object ; our faculties are free ; our affections are fresh ; and, when we return to God, we are entirely God's, having only acted in order to fulfil His will. How much time we lose! This is why it is said, " Watch unto prayer." We should do whatever we do, for God.

Verse 28. It is interesting to see how God takes the most difficult materials in order to form something out of them. He takes the heart of man such as it is, in order to make of it a new thing by the life of the new Man, which He introduces there ; it is the Spirit which worketh these things, because it is the Spirit of love which is there.

Verse 29. Here is seen the contrast between the old man and the new. It is one or the other which speaks ; it is murmuring or giving of thanks. The matured Christian would only speak for edification ; the new man, acting under the influence of the Spirit, will only take part in things which are for edification.

Verses 30, 31. It is precious for us to know that the Christian has been sealed for the day of redemption, for the day when his body will be raised. When Christ shall have accomplished all that for which He died, our body (for Christ has redeemed it) will be raised, which has not yet taken place. It is said that Christ has been made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; redemption is put the last. It is not here the price paid for the purchase that is spoken of, but the result of this purchase. There are two things to be remarked in what follows : the new man and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not created, He is an independent Being in us; we must not grieve Him. All that which accords not with the Holy Spirit is not suitable for the Christian. On the other hand, we see that we have full assurance: God has set His seal upon us; and this strengthens faith. We enter into the thoughts of God; we find there not only the motives of holiness, but also the power of holiness. That which assures me of redemption puts me on my guard not to grieve the Holy Spirit. If we are in the presence of our Father, His love prevents us from falling. It is thus that the Holy Spirit seals us for the day of redemption, and guards us from evil.

Verse 32. My foundation being what God has done for me, I have the consciousness of the goodness of God. If I am blessed myself (see 1 Pet. 3 : 9), I can shew love to others; feeling that God has pardoned me takes away all bitterness from my life, from my manner of acting. Our Father, having forgiven us, desires that our hearts should be in freedom towards all, and that we should act in peace and love. It is sweet to be thus set with God, representing in ourselves the character of God.

CHAPTER 5.

Verses 1, 2. The first verse hangs on the preceding chapter; as God has forgiven you, forgive one another. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children." The general principle is—Be ye followers of God, follow Him, walk in His steps, act on the same principles as He does. Inasmuch as we are the family of God, we ought to be like God our Father. There is something very sweet in this principle, and very different from that of the law; it produces in the heart quite other feelings; it is affection, it is the goodness of God which constrains us to walk. The apostle here introduces a principle which flows out of the last verse of the preceding chapter; that is to say, to walk in love, to imitate God, to follow Christ. If God is love, Christ is also the expression of this love toward us; we ought also to leave all for our brethren; 1 John 3 : 16. The motives of this conduct are expressed in the first and second verses, which we have just read. We ought to imitate God according to the heart of a child; and the effect of this love of God in the heart of a Christian is, that he gives up himself to the needs of his brethren. This is what was seen in Christ. Having the life of Christ, the divine nature and the

in the walk is necessary, if we would not grieve the Spirit; there must be the hidden life, that is to say, the heart must abide in Jesus; in a word, Christ should be the end of all our life. There is enough love in Jesus to make His members grow.

If we had sufficient love, we should draw out of Jesus what would produce this growth in others; and we need it in the present time when there are so many things that dim the testimony of the saints. Our part really is to be separate from evil; we must see Christ so clearly as to be able to say, This or that is not of Christ; and if persons are overwhelmed by cares, it is impossible that Christ should be discerned by them so as to deliver them from things which are like Christ, but which still are not Himself. What we have to seek after is to be sufficiently spiritual as to be able to realise what Christ is; the effect of this will be subjects of intercession, which will doubtless cause sorrow of heart, because the faults and failures of the members of the body are borne there; but nevertheless, where love is in action, there will be always joy.

Verse 17. There is a principle here, which it is of importance to have a firm hold of: it is, that the whole conduct of the Christian flows from salvation, and is not in order that he may be saved: it is not that we do not gain something, or that Paul does not exhort us to run towards the mark (1 Cor. 9 : 24); but the whole walk of the Christian ought to be the manifestation of a new life. The moment that we hear an exhortation as to conduct, and that we do not hear it as addressed to a saved person, the gospel is displaced. All must be addressed to me as a child of God; this is why the apostle says, "I beseech you," etc. It is because of this grace that I beseech you. The moment that I mix up an exhortation with the freeness of salvation, man is not in the position in which Christ has set him; it may have the appearance of piety, but the fact remains, that if I exhort, and at the same time admit a question about salvation, I deny, and I have not a right consciousness of, the state of ruin in which man is, any more than of salvation.

Verses 18, 19. This is the commentary and the centre of all that we have just said. Man is alienated from the life of God. In the times in which we live men would be ashamed to do what was then done openly; but this changes nothing as to the fact: whether a man is alienated from the life of God, or a heathen, it is the same thing.

Verses 20–23. This is the truth which is in Jesus; if we are saved, we are created anew. And the verse which follows explains to us this truth, namely Jesus, who is Himself the new Man.

Verse 24. Here is the truth of the new man in us. The question is not of changing what we were, but God has given us a new life, eternal life. We have seen the manner in which the church is united to Jesus; the truth which is in Jesus is the presence of this life in the Christian. We ought to put off the old man in us, and to put on the new man. This hidden life must manifest itself in all that the man puts on. The old man is in itself a captive, a slave of sin, and a prey to the lusts which lead him away. Moral discernment is wanting. But where the new man is, there is also spiritual intelligence. We are renewed; and this intelligence judges of things according to God. Man is free in the things of God; God is found there. We are capable of seeing things which are suitable for God. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We then have the consciousness of the beauty of the things of God, and it is man who discerns them. The man who does not act by the power of the Spirit acts according to the flesh.

We are created according to God. God is formed in us. Christ was the image of the invisible God: He manifested in His ways the character of God. Also the Christian is a new creation. The apostle speaks, in this verse, of the power of God, which has produced that life in which we enjoy God. God has set His seal upon us; it is quite a new thing; the lusts of the old man are no longer in question, but the energy of the new man—that understanding which speaks according to truth.

Verse 25. In this verse is seen how everything hangs on our union with Christ. There is evidently no bond either of love or of the Spirit with one to whom I lie; but if I lie to my brother, it is as if I deceived myself. The power of the life of Christ is also power in all the details of the Christian's life. We are members one of another.

Verse 26. We see here in the acting of the new man that there may be such a thing as being angry (for example, Christ in the case of the man who had the withered hand, Mark 3 : 5); it is then indignation against evil. (See 2 Cor. 7 : 11.) If it is the anger of the new man on account of evil, then, as soon as the evil is removed, the soul returns to its rest; but if

always exists. If attention be paid to what is said about ministry, it will be seen that when the apostle speaks of the perfect man, he does not allude to the perfection which follows resurrection, but to the perfection of this knowledge. We have seen that this is connected with the basis which the Spirit has laid for all these truths; that is Christ fulfilling all things and dwelling in us here below. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the church, makes each member to grow according to that which is in Christ and according to the measure of Christ. As there is unity in the body, there is also the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son. Here, the Spirit's thought is to make all the members grow according to the revelation of the glory of Christ; and this shews us what our desires ought to be, and what we ought to desire for our brethren. Christ has grace enough in Himself for this. We should desire that all Christians near us should be full of knowledge, even to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and this knowledge of the revelation of the glory of Christ here below, naturally produces fruits. Such is the meaning of the word "perfection." The question is as to knowing Christ. Christ is altogether perfect as risen from the dead: the Christian is so when he has risen up to that position of Christ. Paul said, "Not that I have already attained." But he had attained to that spiritual joy, that knowledge which revealed to him the object set before him. When it is thus with the Christian, he is at peace, and he can grow as to practical conduct; he has the consciousness of being in that which is infinite, of being in the enjoyment of Christ before the Father, according to the accomplishment of all the counsels of God. As to his soul before God, he no longer travails, so to speak, as when he drew nigh to God, conscious in himself of his need of expiation. As to his soul, He has nothing to search after; all being accomplished, he finds himself set before God, in that fulness itself, even in reference to all the circumstances which may befall him; he knows that Christ has all power in heaven and in earth.

Verse 14. If I have nothing to seek, I rest in quietness; the place I am in is the fulness of the knowledge of God, sheltered from the deceivableness of men. The Christian, who possesses Christ, no longer seeks Him as one whom he has yet to find, though he seeks to grow in those things into which he has been brought; but in the church we see souls in a state

very different from this, which is indeed sorrowful: generally, Christians need to be brought back to the position which has been purchased for them. A Christian is perhaps blessed with salvation, but he is occupied with the things of the earth; he has cares, and ministry must then be occupied with the sorrows which result thence. But where there are believers whose affections are full of Jesus, they can go onwards, and there is progress; because where souls are living they seek after fresh graces. If we walk in individual faithfulness, we are able to be occupied with the things which are before us; when this is not the case, we must be occupied with our own misery, and it is sorrowful to be occupied with things which are a loss in comparison of the knowledge of Christ. If we walk according to the knowledge that we have, we are lively, and the things which are before us attract us onward; we can, forgetting present things, be occupied with the grace that is in Christ.

Verses 15, 16. Each member acts in its place; each part has its place. This place may be a hidden one, but it is not the less important; the thought presented is that of the growth of the body. A soul which is lively builds up others; the Spirit acts in souls which turn not back; the gospel working produces inward blessing. We see as we have said, in the place where all fulness dwells all becomes grace, even trials; because they make us enjoy with intelligence the counsels of God. If an evil occurs, it becomes only the opportunity for manifesting the love of Jesus, and this serves to strengthen faith. But all consists in our growing up in the Head; this is the only true growth which is in the knowledge of Jesus; because this knowledge is that of grace. The Spirit acts by the word (through faith and understanding of the things of God), all the while it is my life which grows and communicates to me a developed manifestation of life.

But let us go back to what we have a right to expect from the children of God; I am here speaking of the oneness of faith and of the knowledge of Christ. If love dwells in us, and we think of the members of Christ, that will lead us to ask that they may grow according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. But, alas! many are often more occupied with this present life than seeking the growth of souls. Love is of God, and it is always powerful. If we were in a healthy state, we should grow in God. Faithfulness

by those with whom I am in this relationship, because I could not do evil " in the Lord " : it is a most simple principle.

Verses 2, 3. Paul refers to this promise, which has often been a difficulty to some, as though temporal promises now belonged to a certain line of conduct. The citation only shews us how much God estimated obedience under the law. However, I believe there is a blessing belonging to obedience to parents. But in the order of the government of God, in the ways of God with us personally in this world, there are important things which modify this. The Jewish system was the expression of the government of God in this world, and the blessing belonged to him who honoured his father and mother.

Verse 4. This is an important truth for parents, and which flows from the church being a company apart. It is evident that God desires that the children of Christians should be brought up as Christians. I must act as a Christian with regard to my child, and not otherwise ; I must exercise towards him the discipline of God, and bring him up as a disciple—we do very wrong if we act otherwise. If it so happen that parents are converted at the moment their children are growing up, it will then be more difficult for these parents to bring them up in the manner we have just said. But God is faithful to direct these parents, and to guide them according to their need ; it will be a subject of prayer for them. In the verse before us the apostle supposes children whom parents are beginning to bring up.

If a Christian mother introduce or allow her child to go into the world, she must expect a strong reaction when her child is in the midst of the world ; but God is faithful to the mother who acts faithfully according to the instructions of the Lord. The moment there is a duty, God is there ; and God is faithful to make us succeed, though we may have to pass through many a painful hour. But, alas! we like what is most easy ; neither is it right for us to use the word as a law to make a child obey. We frequently hear parents say to their children that, if not good, God will punish them, thus putting them under a law ; this ought not to be. I ought to be a Christian with my child. God cannot bless parents who make a severe law of the Christian religion with their children ; and much less when they allow themselves to go back to worldliness and worldly motives. They ought to be Christian as to their

children, and to act towards them according to the truth into which God has brought themselves.

Verses 5, 6. The expression, " as unto Christ," is striking. What is not done according to God ought not to be done ; but as to our own will, we must have submission and spiritual discernment to know when submission ought to be absolute. When there is no evil, by submitting myself I act as from God, without asking whether the authority is wise or not ; I am wise in obeying : and so, every time that the question is as to obeying my master, I do it without troubling myself about what he tells me ; I do what he wishes, no matter what ; I do it as in the sight of God and for God.

Verse 7. It little matters where God has placed me in this world, provided I serve Christ ; and this principle can be applied to the most ordinary things of life ; even if I light a fire, I can do it as for the Lord ; and how honourable this makes it! What I do is for Him, and because He wishes me to do it ; and I do it with good will for the Lord Jesus, serving Him with love.

Verse 8. The Christian religion has found its way into the midst of evil, and given liberty where there was none ; it has given it even to the poor slaves, and that without taking them out of their state of bondage. The gospel does not touch that position. Paul acknowledges slavery as a right, when he sends back Onesimus to his master, telling him that in grace he would treat this slave as a brother. Christ comes in where sin reigns. It is a power superior to all here below, and which subsists in the midst of what is found here.

Verse 9. Ye are slaves of Christ, and servants of Christ, and with Him there is no acceptance of persons ; if servants, ye can serve Him, however low your condition be as to this world ; and if masters, ye ought to serve Him whatever are your advantages here below.

Verse 10. Here is strength! What joy to be able to say, If I am weak, Christ is my strength! We do not enjoy this strength when we are at a distance from the Lord, and when we parley with circumstances, instead of retiring into Jesus by prayer. If we gave ourselves to prayer, all would soon be overcome.

Verse 11. We must put on the whole armour of God ; for if we have only truth and not righteousness, or only righteousness and not truth, the devil may reach us. The first counsel

present it to Himself "glorious, having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing."

There is reference here to the last Adam and the church; of which Adam and Eve were the types. Whilst Adam slept, God built for him a wife (this is the literal force of the Hebrew word) and presented her to him when he awoke. It is the same here; whilst Christ is hidden, so to speak, in God, God builds the church; and when it shall be perfected, it will be presented to Christ, or rather He will present it to Himself, being God and last Adam at the same time.

It is a precious thing to see that Christ so well knows how to take His measures that there will not be the least thing in His spouse which will not satisfy His heart; she will not have a wrinkle when He presents her to Himself; and all is based upon this, that He has given Himself for her; not only He has given His body unto death, His life, but also Himself. There is nothing in Christ—not an affection, not an element of wisdom, nor energy of devotedness, not a thought, nor perfection—not one thing in all the self-devotedness of Christ for the church—upon which the Christian may not count.

Verses 29–31. There is in verse 29 something more than that which precedes. Not only Christ purifies the church by the word, but He nourishes and cherishes it; He considers its weakness; He shews tenderness and love towards it to nourish it as being His own body.

Verses 32, 33. It is said in verse 32, "This is a great mystery." What the apostle had at heart was the relationship between Christ and the church. We see in the verses which we have just read, four things: 1, Christ gave Himself for the church; 2, He sanctifies it by the word; 3, He presents it to Himself without wrinkle; 4, He nourishes and cherishes it, by giving all that He has for it, in order to shew how dear it is to Him. He loves it as Himself. It is precious to have the inward consciousness of the affection of Christ for the church. This is an important truth, and it is essential to distinguish the difference of this love, which belongs to relationships which God has established, and the goodness of His nature towards all. The consequence of it is that Christ undertakes the whole work; we are only His, entirely His. It is not a law, but a tie which binds us to another, that is, Christ. The moment that the power of man works, it is no longer Christ who has taken all upon Him for us.

CHAPTER 6.

Verse 1. We cannot enter into the force of this expression, obedience in the Lord or according to the Lord, unless we take our place before the Lord with spiritual understanding. Christ, when He was with His mother and Joseph, had the power of the relationship in Himself; this power of judging good and evil led Him to obey. It is in like manner with us: we ought to obey as to that which regards our relationships in this world. We must understand our position in Christ, in order to be able to obey. God formed these relationships from the beginning; natural relationships are of God, but sin has corrupted all. Now this is what the Lord does: He does not bring in a remedy for this state of ruin; but He introduces a new man, having given Himself without sin in order to take away sin; and this new man is Christ. It is evident then that this new Man recognises what God has done in establishing these natural relationships; but in a manner superior to these very relationships. So when Christ began His ministry, He recognised nothing in this world; but He submitted to all as an individual, perfect in the midst of this evil. When He came into this world, He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Nevertheless, He submitted to those who stood to Him in the relationship of parents, until God called Him to His own proper service. He acted as from God, as superior to the obligation. The Christian, in like manner, by his union with Christ is superior to his obligations, inasmuch as he has with God a new relationship beyond nature; but he recognises this obligation according to the intelligence which this new relationship gives to him, and the consequence is that He is infinitely more obedient, because he obeys as from God. But it is impossible that I do evil as from God, or that I prefer anything before the authority of Christ. I am made more subject according to the perfection of God in Christ; and likewise by the introduction of the new man, the strength of the obligation is maintained, but according to God. In order to act as Christ did in the world, we need spiritual discernment. God cannot deny the obligations which He has created; but if I act in these relationships, as being from above and not from below, I shall obey with all my heart, but in a superior position, which does not allow of the evil into which I might be drawn

world would have no pleasure, nor enjoyment. The Spirit is there in power. When Christians have life amongst them, occupying themselves with the things which are properly theirs, instead of hesitating in spiritual things, then the life grows; the consequence is, that we see things according to God, we are able to give thanks for all things; we live and we dwell there.

Verse 21. It is this spirit of gentleness which recognises Christ in a brother, and that spirit of submission which does not exalt itself; it is when Christians are united and mingle one with another that they realise these things, for individuality is often pride.

Verses 22–24. What is said in these verses is strong: for, as is often the case, the wife may have more wisdom than her husband, but the effect of this wisdom will be for the wife to leave to her husband the place that God has given to him; for if the grace of God acts in the heart, the order which God has established reigns always, and if the wife governs, God is not there. But if this particular wisdom of God is recognised, the order of God is maintained, and blessing is the consequence.

Verses 25, 26. There are always in the word positive directions, and it is never well for us not to follow them. We may remark here three things as to Christ and as to the church, which flow out of the love of Christ for the church: 1, He has loved the church and given Himself for it; 2, that He might sanctify it by the word; 3, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, etc.

Verses 27, 28. Christ will present the church to Himself in glory. The order in which these things are placed gives such assurance. Christ does not sanctify the church before having redeemed it. No, it is when she belongs to Him that He devotes Himself to make her such as He would have her to be. We may remark here, it is not said that God loves the church; nor is mention made of that loving-kindness of God which seeks to save souls, though His goodness is acting towards all men in sending Christ to them. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." But there is another thing which is not properly the goodness of God, either in the sense of providence, or in that of the love in His nature. God in His counsels desires to enter into a certain relationship with His own people; God desires to

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have children, and Christ a spouse. They are affections based upon a relationship which exists. If God has made us His children He cannot do less than love us as such; once this relationship established, He cannot fail in it. It is never said that Christ has loved the world, while we have seen that God has loved the world; John 3 : 16. See also the character of the providential goodness of God; Jonah 4 : 11. The goodness of God, which watches over all His works, is precious; we ought to act in the same way as following Him, we ought to love everybody; Matt. 5 : 44–48.

But there is another thought besides that of this goodness of God; there is a love, the consequence of an established relationship. God having set us in this relationship, the affections of God and of Christ flow forth naturally towards us who are the objects of it. God loves His children with a love which will never deny itself. Christ has made Himself responsible for all the debts of His spouse; and more, the church being the spouse of Christ, she has lost her earthly citizenship and acquired a heavenly one. Christ has become the one responsible for all that His church has done and will do; the church, as the spouse of Christ, has lost her individuality, in order that she may pertain to Christ, her heavenly Bridegroom. Christ, as the anointed Man, felt a distaste for the world; He would none of this world; He would not have His affections there. The Christian, in like manner, ought not to be able to bear the world as to its objects of desire and its walk. Christ has given Himself in order to satisfy the justice of God and to conquer, for the church's sake, the power of Satan; having set her free, He is occupied with her, and, as she is not what He desires, He sanctifies her. The Spirit of God makes allusion here to a practice among the Jews, who purified themselves by washing in pure water. It is by the word that Christ cleanses and sanctifies the church; all the revelation of what God is is thus applied to the heart. This is why Jesus says, "I sanctify myself for their sakes"; I set Myself apart, as being the expression of all the thoughts of God, and I communicate them to Mine, that they also may be sanctified through the truth. Christ is not untrue to the thoughts of God. The word is the means of communicating them, it judges all in us and manifests what is in God. This is what Christ did here below.

The final object of the work of Christ for the church is to

him; he learns what are his ways; he knows what he would like in the circumstances which transpire. Thus we prove what is acceptable to the Lord.

Verse 11. The experience of righteousness in us produces an entire separation from evil; it produces fruits of light. Paul insists upon the necessity of having no fellowship with the works of darkness. A Christian cannot join himself with these things, but rather even convict them. Verse 12. By this verse is shewn to us to what an extent our evil nature will go.

Verse 13. This is the effect of light in Christ and in the Christian. We see nothing in the dark; but the light manifests all. The natural man would be ashamed to do in the light what he does in the dark—things which would be done openly among the heathen. Christianity has necessarily destroyed, up to a certain point, the grossness of sin even with those who are not yet converted. The Christian is in the light which manifests all. The light applies itself to every connection which he could form with this world.

Verse 14. The men of this world are dead, and the Christian who walks according to the spirit of this world is as if he were dead, slumbering amidst the dead, dreaming, it is true, sometimes about his wretched position; but as to action, he is there amongst the dead; he does not know what to do, and how should he know? The same may be said of all that, in the Christian, which morally can be called sleep. It is a most sorrowful state in contrast with that which is described to us above. Christ cannot enlighten a soul thus placing itself among the dead; He can work in order to awaken such, but He does not give light to them that are asleep, to those who do not awake from among the dead. Since the light makes all manifest, there is a needs-be that the Christian should awake, and Christ will give him light. It is Christ Himself who is the source, the expression, and the measure of light for the soul that is awake. What use is light to him who will walk in darkness?

Verse 15. In heaven there will be no "Take heed"; there we may give free way to perfect joy: there all is holy; but down here in this life, in the midst of evil, we must take need, we must use wisdom. The man of the world, in order to avoid evil, must be skilled in the knowledge of the evil. The Christian has no need to think about evil; he must be wise without the knowledge of evil, as it is written, "Simple

concerning evil, wise as to that which is good " (Rom. 16 : 19), because full and divine knowledge of good in the midst of evil is what Christ gives. What He Himself was here contains no familiar acquaintance with evil ; the child of God ought to possess that wisdom which is simple as a dove—spiritual wisdom.

Verse 16. This is likewise wisdom ; it is to gain time in order to do good. The same expression is used in speaking of the magicians, the Chaldeans, in Daniel 2 : 8 ; they gained time in order to conceal their inability, they had the prudence of this world. We need wisdom in order to be able to do good in spite of Satan, whose power makes the present time one of difficulty. If we have this wisdom for good, we shall escape the wiles of Satan ; we shall leave his nets on one side and pass on ; we shall do the good that God may give us to do ; we shall have time for God. If we are in God's light, we shall walk in the simplicity of that which is good, and God will be with us. Let us think of God as Father and on what Christ did, in order to do like unto Him. If sleep overtake us, we must awake, and Christ will give us light.

Verses 17, 18. Verse 16 had shewn us that we must redeem the time. The days are evil when God allows Satan to exercise his power, and they are so in general until Jesus return ; but there are times when God permits the enemy to govern more directly, and others when He puts a check on him. The evil days are a chastisement, a humiliation for the church ; but he who is faithful has his way pointed out ; he ought to redeem the time, to seize the opportunity of doing good ; Neh. 6 : 3. This is why it is said (*v.* 17), " Be not unwise " ; but there is also an energy, a force in the Spirit which is given to us, which is contrasted with the excitement by which the world thinks to produce faith—excitement which is evil—an evil course of life, the true character of which verse 18 shews us. When the Spirit descended upon the one hundred and twenty at Jerusalem, the world said, " They are full of new wine." The power of the Spirit in truth does put a man beyond the power of what is natural to himself ; the words rise to his lips as a fruit of the Spirit's action, and he is the subject of a joy which flows over. In him who is full of the Holy Ghost there is what is not natural to man—something altogether extraordinary.

Verses 19, 20. It is quite another life, it is a joy outside of the world's range ; it is a company apart, in which the

word of God to overthrow us. This word is called the sword of the Spirit, not of the understanding, but of the Spirit in us. It is the Spirit of God who alone can handle the sword of the word. It is the Spirit who recalls the suitable passage at the moment of temptation (we have a striking example of it in Christ in the hour of His temptation). We may reason about the things of God, but this does nothing for us against the enemy; the Spirit must act in us and apply the word. It is evident that if we have grieved the Spirit, if our loins are not girded, the Spirit cannot be there to handle the word; on the contrary, in that case, Satan employs it against us. If the Christian has not this happy consciousness of being for God, he has nothing to say when Satan presents a temptation before him: the smallest warning of the word troubles and overthrows him, because the word is not through the Spirit a weapon in his hand against the enemy; but it is in the hand of the enemy against him. It is true that God uses the word as a means of convincing of sin, and thus awakes the soul by acting on the conscience; but every time that this word is not made use of on the principle of grace, it is not the work of the Spirit of God. If this conviction of sin leads us to mistrust God, it does not proceed from Him, but from the enemy; the Spirit convinces of sin through the word, but it shews the refuge in Christ; it does not drive to despair.

The word is represented to us as a weapon for us to handle, for it works in two ways: first, the Spirit, in using the word, can act in us by presenting to us the object which fills our hearts with joy and hope; but besides, He can use it when He would convince us of sin. The Spirit will indeed shew us what are the consequences of sin, but He will never tell us that Christ is not sufficient for our soul. The Spirit cannot deny the testimony which He bears to the glory and to the work of Jesus in grace; He can use the holiness of God to produce in us the deepest feeling of sin; but He will never tell us that God is not the God of grace towards us. To the Christian who has peace, and to whom the love of the Father has been revealed, it is perfectly clear, that if he has any other feeling about sin, it is not the Spirit of God which produces it. If we have failed, the Spirit will make us sorrowful, but He will never tell us that the Master of the house is not our Lord; this thought would be the fruit of unbelief. But here the apostle goes a little farther; he supposes faith to be in exercise, and

he places the word in the hand. Satan will tell us that we are not able to use the sword of the Spirit. Then this same Spirit, who recalls the passage, silences Satan. Again, look at Christ in His temptation, Christ who never lost His confidence. The Spirit was there in power. Christ had His loins girded, and He had on the breastplate of righteousness; He was calm and knew how to use the very passage which was suitable for the circumstance. Paul supposes a Christian who is standing fast in this power of the Spirit, and who completely stops the mouth of Satan, when he tries in a thousand ways to make him fall. Such a Christian, having all the defensive weapons, is able to handle the sword of the Spirit; and when the Spirit in him is not grieved, He bears witness to the favour of God. The word of God is the most powerful of the weapons of the Christian's strength.

Verses 18–20. The second weapon which is given to us is prayer in the Spirit; it is that prayer which springs from the energy of the spiritual life when the Spirit is not grieved in us; the same Spirit, which acting in us, uses the word, becomes a Spirit of intercession and seeks the interposition of God in favour of the saints, and of the work of God in the world. It is a soul at ease in the presence of God—a soul watching, instead of allowing itself to be surprised; and its prayers, instead of being complaints, will be according to the power of the Spirit; we can then use prayer as men who have watched, and who have found in watching subjects for the intervention of God. We may be afflicted, cast down, without being under the power of the enemy.

If I hear bad news, whether relating to the church of God or to a brother, it will make me sorrowful and cast me down, as it did Paul, who had fightings without and fears within. But though thus sorrowful, if Satan has nothing in us, the consequence of this depression will be communion with God, instead of having allowed our affections to wander; we are in the presence of God, we watch with Him in order to speak to Him; but if this is not the case, Satan will take us unawares in moments of carelessness. If we walk with God, this will cause prayers according to the mind of God. The broken heart finds in Jesus the full certainty of God's favour. The Philippians, in their suffering state, had met with God instead of being frightened by it (Phil. 1 : 28); and though afflicted, if I am in the power of the Spirit, it will only cause more

on all his walk in this world. God having given to the soul this place before Him, He begins to teach it to walk; and the walk of such a one here below partakes of this gospel of peace, of the peace which we first enjoy with God through the gospel, in virtue of the work of Christ, and which, setting us in communion with God, makes us happy in that which is good, and enables us, by this communion, to overcome the sin and rebellion of the heart. All that we meet with makes manifest in our walk by the Spirit the peace which we enjoy. It is beautiful to see a soul which brings the power of such peace into the world.

In this faithful walk the Christian meets with the fiery darts of the wicked one; the more faithful he is, the more also will Satan seek to trouble him; if he can cause a wicked thought to cross the heart, that is a dart; but the soul of the faithful is at peace; nothing can trouble him, though Satan tries to disturb this peace. If secret self-complacency glides unto the heart, it is the enemy who seeks to take away our confidence. We see Christ in this calm and perfect confidence in the midst of His suffering (John 18 : 11), peace keeping His soul; not that He could feel joy in drinking the cup, but He felt it in receiving the cup from the hand of Him who gave it to Him: nothing could shake His confidence; all the darts of Satan were quenched on the shield of faith. At the moment when He was broken-hearted, crushed by the iniquity of men, He said, "I thank thee, O Father," Matt. 11 : 25. When we meet with a trial, instead of complaining of others and reproaching them, we ought to take refuge in God; but frequently we do the very opposite, we distrust God; if we meet with difficulties, we reflect on God, and reproach Him with the iniquity of man. Satan seeks to produce mistrust; this is why the apostle says we must take the shield of faith.

Verse 16. Entire confidence in God is needed. From the position we see all the storms below us, we are at peace; but if we have not this confidence, there are things which trouble us. This is our position: we are on the earth, the flesh still in us; Satan is in the heavens, but Christ is still higher, at the right hand of God. Christ (in order that faith may be put to the test) has not yet driven out Satan; but if by faith we lay hold of the truth that Christ has done everything, that He has gained the victory over Satan, and that He is gone up far above all heavens to the right hand of God, we are then above all

circumstances. I know Christ; I am near to God; I see things according to God and not according to circumstances. We see in Numbers, when the water failed, Israel threw the blame on God, and Moses thought about himself and his own personal importance. We frequently behave ourselves in the same way in affliction; but it is a want of confidence in God. Satan would like to break the links between us and God; but God has given us evident proofs of His love by giving us His Son, who has all power in heaven and on earth. Satan cannot take from us His grace; but if our loins are not girded about, our communion is interrupted.

Verse 17. The salvation of a soul once brought nigh to God is a settled thing; it is a helmet, a defence which guards him from the attacks of the enemy. There is a difference between this blessed position and that of working for salvation. In my battles with the enemy, I have on my head the assurance of salvation. He cannot touch me, I have eternal life; Satan cannot break in upon that. This gives boldness in the conflict; having the consciousness that God has saved us, we go on, the head lifted up (not proudly as to the fear of God), but trusting in Him, fearing nothing. Such is the case when we have the affections on Christ; we are so set as to be enabled to go on with boldness, by power being given to us to use the armour of God. This is what God desires for us. It is a blessed position to stand fast in the conflict. Truth applies to the judgment in the inner man. Practical righteousness guards the conscience from the assaults of the enemy; the power of peace gives a character to our walk; confidence in the love of God quenches the poisoned arrows of doubt; the assurance of salvation gives us boldness to go onwards.

We have seen in what precedes, that the apostle begins by setting before us that which gives inward strength, namely, the armour defensive against the attacks of the enemy. Now he speaks of the offensive weapons, and begins with the sword of the Spirit, as the means of resisting the power of Satan in the evil day; he speaks of the sword as a means of standing; the helmet is placed before the sword, because if there is not this confidence, this assurance, we cannot even handle the sword of the Spirit. All the threats, the warnings and precepts as to sanctification, become so many means, in the hands of Satan, to lay hold of us by, if we have not the confidence that God is for us; without this confidence Satan can use even the

governed by it. If our hearts are full of Jesus, we are sanctified by the truth, as it is in Jesus, which sets us free and which sanctifies us.

The word " reins " expresses all that is within. The inner affections, the inmost thoughts, are turned towards God, the heart is with God ; all that is not of Him being judged, I am in communion with Him, I am in His presence, taught by Him. The apostle urges that our thoughts, our affections, should be governed by the truth ; that that which the Spirit teaches us should reign over our hearts. This is what we must begin with ; the heart must be at large, set free from the power of every lust and of every spiritual error ; at liberty in the truth. We cannot be happy if we allow our hearts to go after all that presents itself to us ; for then, in our service, we are not able to resist Satan. Perhaps we are not aware of the evil ; the effect of it is not at first felt, but in an evil day it will discover itself. (See Job.) Satan roams around us, and seeks to overthrow us ; this is why we must not allow our hearts to go abroad after everything, without paying attention, or without being on our guard ; because Satan will have thereby power over us in the evil day. The established Christian discerns good and evil ; his thoughts no longer wander about here below. If our thoughts are in heaven with Jesus, we are in safety. It is impossible for us to be happy here below, if we do not walk in holiness. There, in heaven, we shall be able to let loose our hearts, because nothing will be there but holiness and the glory of God ; but here, in the presence of the enemy with such deceitful hearts, we must have truth to govern them : " Having your loins girt about with truth." It is the application of what is in Christ to the affections, in order that the heart may have the understanding of spiritual things, and we may walk according to Christ.

Be it observed, that all we have just said is true of each and every Christian ; for he is in the truth, he has righteousness by faith, he possesses the gospel of peace. But the apostle desires that we should use these graces in our practical walk. If our hearts are guided by the Spirit of Jesus, we have the consciousness of walking in practical righteousness in all that concerns us ; Satan will have nothing to say against us in the evil day, nothing which will weaken us in our conflicts with him. If the conscience is not good, if righteousness is not realised, we have no strength ; we must hide ourselves in the

day of battle. When Satan attacks the children of God, he does it according to the holiness of God, and they would be overthrown by having things on their conscience about which a worldly person would feel no uneasiness. The Spirit acting on the conscience cannot but give to holiness all its strength; and for him there is but the holiness of God. Also, the nearer we are to God, the more will Satan seek to surprise us. It is impossible for anyone to have a just estimate of the holiness of God unless standing fast in grace, and unless firm against the attacks of Satan. If we do not walk before God according to the light, which we profess to have, God's strength is not with us; and frequently even God withdraws the light in which we did not choose to walk. If we have failed in anything, we must have recourse to grace. If habitually we walk in the Spirit, as soon as we have stumbled we shall judge ourselves before God, before Satan attacks us; for God is good and faithful in His grace, and we shall be calm. Christ was ever with His Father, and when the evil day came, He was calm. (See for him who has failed, the example of David, Psalm 32 : 5 : " Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," etc.) That which the Spirit commands is to be clothed with the breastplate of righteousness; because with this armour we have nothing on the conscience. A man cannot handle his sword if he is ill: God begins then, as we have said, by strengthening the man himself; then He speaks of the testimony which he ought to bear. God will have the soldier prepared for the battle.

Verse 15. He who is holy and righteous in his practical walk is the one who is in communion with God, who is at peace and restful in all his connections with God, and vigilant as to that which is good, knowing that Satan goeth about; but he is without fear, knowing that he walks together with God; and having nothing which disquiets him in his walk, the consequence is that he is at peace. This title of peace is one given to God more than any other; 1 Thess. 5 : 23; Heb. 13 : 20; Rom. 16 : 20, etc. If there is one thought which is predominant in the character of God, it is peace. The soul which is thus in God is full of peace; he enjoys fully the gospel of God; he enjoys His grace; his soul is in peace, and coming forth from immediate communion with God to walk through this poor world, in this spirit of peace all his ways are marked with peace; this character sets its impress

which the Spirit gives us here is to be strong in the Lord; and second, to have the whole armour of God; because the arms of man are useless against spiritual wickedness. The man of the world does not know that he is the object of the attacks of Satan, and in truth he is rather his slave, never having been delivered; but the Christian is the object of his attack, and if he is not clothed with the whole armour of God, the darts of the enemy reach him. None can resist him but the one who is thus clothed, for Satan is always there using wiles and artifices; he is often as a lion, but more habitually as a serpent, and he tries to reach us and introduce the point of his weapon; he seeks to deal his blows wherever he finds a part of the body unprotected, not clothed with this armour of God.

Verse 12. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, that is to say, not against man, as the Israelites who had to fight against the Canaanites. No! but against spiritual wickedness, against the powers of this world. When the flesh acts in the Christian, Satan can attack him; the flesh has no power whatsoever against Satan. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not," 1 John 5 : 18. We have a perfect example in Jesus. The new man in us is never tempted. These evil powers are in the heavens, whence they are not yet driven out; and in their wickedness they act not in a gross but in a spiritual manner. Christ is still sitting down, and His enemies are not yet put under His feet; but we have the promise, that the God of peace will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. It is of all importance not to be terrified by him, for in Christ we gain the victory over the enemy of our souls: but it is needful for us to be aware of these ambushes, and to know what is acting against us.

That which guards us is the power of the Spirit in the path of obedience. The presence of the enemy in the heavens has spoiled and continues to spoil all the good that God ever committed to man; this is true, even in Christianity here below, because the heavens are not yet changed: the atmosphere is evil. But it is said, "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you." If Satan meets Christ in us, he flies, for Christ has conquered him; but the flesh does not resist him. If I am in the flesh, the enemy overthrows me, as we have an example in Peter. Peter, after his fall, could strengthen his brethren; because he had learnt to know himself and his weakness, as well as the power of the grace of Christ. It is

well to remember that, when walking in the Spirit, we are sheltered from the darts of the enemy.

Verse 13. In the preceding verses it is the general position of the child of God, in evil days, that is looked at. Here it is the armour more in detail that is spoken of. We have seen two things: 1, that we must be armed with the whole armour; 2, that we must be armed with the whole armour of God. This armour alone can resist the attacks of the enemy. There are times when we are attacked by the enemy, and when God permits that we should be more or less tried. The whole of this present dispensation is the evil day, during which Satan is allowed to exercise his power; Christ is absent from the earth, and Satan is allowed to exercise his power in it. There are moments when we enjoy in peace communion with the Lord, without being disturbed by the enemy: then all is peace; but there are times also when we are made to feel the power of Satan—the power of Christ also, without doubt, but it is in order to fight. This is the reason it is said, "Take the whole armour of God." It is the resisting the manifest attacks of Satan that is here spoken of; not only, as in the case of the Israelites, of gaining certain victories, of conquering certain territories, and of making progress in the country; this is not the immediate thought of the apostle. Inasmuch as we are filled with the Spirit, we already possess all things; while at the same time we have to carry on a warfare in the heavenly places. Satan tries to destroy our confidence, to withdraw us from enjoying Christ, and to take from us the consciousness that we possess all things in Him. What we have to do then in this position, is to stand firm; all is ours, and if we stand fast, we have all. Satan tries to prevent our standing; this is why we are told to put on our armour and to stand fast.

Verse 14. In this verse the means of resistance are set before me; we must have our loins girded about with truth, or else we shall be like a ship with its sails spread, but no ballast—it would founder; the ballast which produces the equilibrium is necessary. It is written, "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth. . . ." and further on, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." Christ set Himself apart as the expression of all the truth of God in man; not that He had only the knowledge of the truth: Christ was Himself the truth. We ought not only to know the truth, but to have our affections filled and

work was right; but soon false brethren came in unawares, Simon Maguses and I know not what, because man was put under responsibility, and the first thing he does is to sin. Noah had the sword put into his hands for governing, and the first thing he does is to get drunk. The law was given, and the first thing the Jews did was to make a golden calf. Priesthood was set up, and the first day they offered strange fire, and Aaron never went into the holy place with the garments of glory and beauty. When royalty was set up, the son of David loved many strange women, and his heart went after their gods. The church was set up, and it failed. Christ will be the perfect Man; Christ will govern the world in righteousness; Christ is the perfect priest; Christ is perfect as the Son of David; He will arise to reign over the Gentiles. He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. Every one of the things put under the responsibility of man will be perfectly carried out. If I confound this accomplishment of purpose in Christ with what is placed under the responsibility of man, and attribute what belongs to the one to the other, I am justifying all the evil and corruption about us. That is the question now in the church of God.

The body is never looked at as incomplete in itself, it would spoil the whole idea. When the purpose of God is brought out, it is looked at as in that purpose. In chapter 1 He gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body. There it is looked at as complete when all things are put under Him. All things are not yet put under Him: it is not accomplished yet; it is in counsels. The moment I get it down here, I get both the house and the body.

Chapter 2 : 21 contains the same thought as Matthew 16 : 18, and also the same as 1 Peter 2.

Verse 22 is the house as set up now upon earth: only when God set it up, He set it up all right. "Ye are builded together for a habitation of God." It is a present thing.

The dwelling of God with men down here is a distinct definite fact, and the fruit of redemption. God never dwelt with man apart from redemption. He did not dwell with Adam; He never dwelt with Abraham, He never dwelt with anybody down here until Israel was redeemed out of Egypt. No doubt this was an outward redemption, still it was in a certain sense redemption. God redeemed His people out of the bondage of Egypt, and in the end of Exodus 29 He says,

" And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them." The moment redemption comes in, He makes the redeemed people His dwelling-place, and He comes down and dwells among them in the tabernacle. This was given up at the captivity when the times of the Gentiles began.

Since Christ's rejection and the accomplishment of the better redemption, the church is established on earth for God to dwell in. This habitation of God through the Spirit was set up, consequent upon redemption, but down here it is trusted to man's responsibility. What it has become now is Christendom.

The increase of the body is spoken of in chapter 4. It is merely the fact that here it grows. You afterwards see the different gifts and all of them exercised, and you find the body grows up, just as a child grows up. There are persons brought in; but they come into it all as a complete thing. The individual persons come in and are a part of that growth. You get evangelists as well as pastors and teachers. Still when individuals come in, they are only part of the same body. So when I eat my body grows. Of course, they are mere figures after all.

But in speaking of these things, you get the individual before anything of the body or the house. You will always find the individual has the first place. The individual relationship is with the Father; the corporate relationship is with Christ as a man: and the house relationship is with the Holy Ghost come down. There are the three. The first is that we have the adoption of children (sons) to Himself; and then that He has given Christ to be head over all things to the church, which is His body. Here is our relationship with Christ as raised and glorified, but before that comes all about the individual. Then in the third place there is the Holy Spirit come down to dwell. It makes a wonderful scheme and plan to put all these things together.

If you look further to the application of all this to ministry, you see, when he is beginning, he says, " Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith [it is the ground and basis that is given for ministry], When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts

the Spirit. Then we go on to individual gifts, and in verse 17 we begin the practical exhortation for all saints, which is continued in chapter 5. At the end of chapter 5 occasion is taken from the case of the husband and wife to bring in the relationship of Christ and the church. After going into the different relationships in which saints are to be faithful, the conflict in heavenly places is taken up.

Now another thing may be remarked as to the epistle, that is, that everything refers to heavenly places; not that we are not upon earth, for we are, but that now to principalities and powers in heavenly places may be known through the church the wisdom of God. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and we are sitting in heavenly places in Christ, we are a testimony to principalities and powers in heavenly places, and we are fighting with wicked spirits in heavenly places. Our blessing, our place, our testimony, and our conflict are all in these heavenly places. Now you will find that ministry here is connected with all these.

Farther, what God is working in chapter 2 is that the whole building effectually framed together groweth into a holy temple. It is only growing up to this end. But moreover "ye are builded together for a habitation of God." This is taking place. The holy temple will be in glory. They are to be a building for a temple even as Christ said, "I will build my church." The temple that is to be is that spoken of by the Lord in Matthew 16: "Upon the rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." You get it also in Peter, "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood." There they are built up stone after stone. So in Ephesians, "and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." It is growing unto an holy temple, but it is not yet finished. The house that Christ builds is a perfect thing, it is not finished yet, but what people commonly call the invisible church. But then there is an actually manifested thing by the Holy Ghost being here: "Ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

In short there are two characters of the assembly, the body of Christ, and the habitation of God now by the Holy Ghost. When we speak of the body of Christ, the members are looked

at as united to the Head in heaven, and, spoken of as the house, will be a holy temple; when we speak of the habitation, it is by the Holy Ghost down here. It is the same thing as far as they went, but they soon ceased to be identical.

In verse 21 it is a temple not yet completed; when it is completed, it will be in glory. We are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit (*v.* 22); this is the present thing. It is just the confounding of these two things that has made popery and ritualism. That is, they have attributed all the privileges which belong to what Christ is building and has not yet finished to the thing that is built on earth. Now when you get a thing built upon earth, God sets it up all right; but like everything else, like man himself when he was created, it is put into man's responsibility. God carries on His own purpose, and against what Christ builds the gates of hades shall never prevail. But always in the first instance, whatever God sets up, He puts into man's responsibility; and then it is all ruined. Nevertheless God's purpose is all accomplished in Christ. This is true of everything. It is true of Israel. It is true of individual saints, and of the whole church. What Christ is carrying on, the gates of hades shall not prevail against. The administration of it is on earth. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul says, "As a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon. Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." This is not Christ's building. It is not Christ carrying out, "I will build my church"; nor the living stones coming and growing into a holy temple. In the latter case there is no agent but Christ. It is He that is building; and therefore, of course, Satan's power cannot prevail against it. In 1 Corinthians 3 it is not Christ building; it is man's responsibility, as it is said, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Wood and hay and stubble can be built in; and if you attribute to wood and hay and stubble the security of what Christ is doing, you will be making a grave mistake. Papists and Puseyites are taking what has been built by man, and confounding it with Christ's work, saying the gates of hades cannot prevail against it. They confound two different works.

God set up right even what is upon earth: "the Lord added to the church* daily such as should be saved." God's

* [The true reading would run thus, "was adding together daily," etc.—Ed.]

SUBSTANCE OF A
READING ON EPHESIANS

THE nature of the Epistle to the Ephesians is quite distinct from that of Romans. In Ephesians we have nothing to do with the responsibility of man; we have with Christ, and man is looked at as dead in sins, and there is a new creation. Consequently the question of justification is not raised in Ephesians, but acceptance is. We have seen before that these are the two great subjects in connection with the gospel: namely, the meeting of the responsibility of man; and the counsels of God before ever there was a responsible man at all. These counsels are in the second Man, not in the first. The first man was the responsible one; the Lord Jesus is the Man of God's counsels, the last Adam or second Man. In Ephesians these counsels of God are taken up; in Romans the responsible man (in grace, but still responsible), sinners, every mouth stopped, and a propitiation through faith in Christ's blood, the whole question of God's meeting us in grace in our responsibility and failure, is fully brought out. In the Ephesians there is nothing of this. It begins with the counsels and intentions of God, and puts us in Christ.

Now the structure of the epistle is this. In chapter 1 we have these counsels of God as to glory, as to Christ, and as to our inheritance. Only at the end the apostle begins to unfold how far the foundation is laid for their accomplishment in what He has already done. So that, after stating the counsels, he enters on what God has done. That is, He has taken Christ from the dead and set Him up far above all heavens, principalities, and powers, and every name named. He commences, observe, with the raising of Christ from the dead. There you get not merely counsels, but the accomplishment, so far as exalting the second Man into glory above all heavens.

Chapter 2 shews how far God has accomplished that mighty work in us. We have been raised from being dead in sins and put into Christ, sitting in Him (not with Him, we are not there yet) in heavenly places. It is the operation of God putting us into His place. It is in Christ I am sitting, not with Him. This makes us God's workmanship; and then He brings us forth a step farther in making both Jews and Gentiles

one. It is still what He has accomplished or is doing so far. He has put down the middle wall of partition, and reconciled us in one body by the cross, that is, down here; and He is not only building a holy temple to the Lord (it is not built yet), but we are builded together, Jews and Gentiles, for the habitation of God by the Spirit down here. This is what God has accomplished. He has raised Christ from the dead, and set Him in glory; He has raised us up spiritually from the dead and put us into Christ; He has abolished all differences of Jew and Gentiles, and He has not only made peace between Jew and Gentile, reconciling them, but He has reconciled them both in one body by the cross. They are reconciled to one another and reconciled to God, and they are going to be a temple, and they are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, that is, down here. This is what is accomplished of His purposes, the foundation being laid for them all.

In chapter 3 follows another thing. It is neither God's counsels nor God's operation, but Paul's administration of all these, the dispensation committed to him. As to the substance of it, it is Paul's administration of the mystery, not God's counsels about it, but the apostle's administration of it; and at the end, as it refers to earth, there is the second prayer which is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus, where Christ is looked at as Son. The first prayer, which is found in chapter 1, is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus as the glorified Man; but this is addressed to the Father, and Christ is looked at as Son, a divine Person. Therefore it is here not the object, or the thing objectively, but rather that Christ may dwell in our hearts, that is, power brought in down here according to His counsels. So that there is to be glory to God in the church in all ages. This is a power that works in us, as the other was toward us.

Having the counsels, and the operation, and Paul's administration, the effect is looked for in chapter 4 as regards there being a habitation of God through the Spirit down here; and then, secondly, here too the individual gifts. This goes down to the end of verse 16. Verse 17 begins the ordinary exhortations as to how to walk. They were to walk together. All distinctions of Jew and Gentile have disappeared. He has brought them together as one habitation of God through the Spirit, and now they are to walk together and keep the unity of

lively intercession. It is precious to see what is produced by affliction, even by chastening; if our walk is spiritual, it will only be an opportunity for gaining the victory, and for driving away Satan. All the members are united to the Head, and by His Spirit interested in all that concerns Him. They cannot always act themselves in such or such a case, but they can, like the centurion, say to Christ, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

As we have seen that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit, so also what importance does the Lord attach to prayer! There are two kinds of prayer: that which is the expression of our wants; and that which being made in the energy of the Spirit, is therefore infallibly answered. Whether for handling the sword of the Spirit, or for prayer, the Christian life must already exist; in order to be able to pray for others, our own life must be with God. There is amongst Christians too little intercession; because they come to a meeting for prayer, after leading a life of languishing, absorbed by present things. The consequence is, their prayers discover the weakness of the individual, and not the work of the Spirit for the good of the church. Too often alas! it is a settling as to our own failures. If we were watchful therein in our daily walk, our prayers would be intercessions, instead of supplications each day for our own faults. What we should desire is, that our individual prayers should be such as to enable us to pray for all saints; without this they will never have this powerful energy of the Spirit. Satan will find some means for overthrowing Christians. How desirable this makes it that there should be some able to bring in the aid of God! The more, whether it be an individual or a body of persons, we are faithful as to our position in this world, the more shall we be exposed to the ambushes of the enemy; and if we do not thus keep close to God, the enemy will find some way of making havoc.

We see here, that the most faithful and advanced Christians feel their dependence upon God, and on all saints. The apostolic gift of Paul depended in one sense on the prayers of the saints: God intended it to be so, in order that the church might be united in its affections; 2 Cor. 1 : 11. The apostle was in a prominent position, and perhaps he received power through the prayers of a poor bed-ridden woman; but all hidden fruits will be seen in the last day. It is an encouraging thing to see that God honours the hidden members which are

the least honourable to the eyes of the flesh. This thought encourages us to walk humbly in our place. Frequently there are persons hidden out of sight, who are the means of blessing for those who are in a very prominent place. We ought to think of the praise which God gives, and not of that of men. The only thing in our service is to glorify God. If my heart, which no one sees, does not beat, I cannot run. There are individuals who are truly the heart of the church ; it is not often the things that are seen which are the most precious in the sight of God.

Verses 21–24. In these last verses, we have the expression of the tenderness of Paul in sending Tychicus to the Ephesians. We see how he counted upon the affection of the saints.

of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." We first get the basis of all these gifts, Christ, but not Christ on earth as the Jew had Messias. All this has disappeared from the apostle's mind; and he sees Him going down into the dust of earth, and then ascending far above all heavens, whereof he takes up the effects. He went down into the lower parts of the earth, the grave, but hades for his soul. He went into the under world, the lower parts of the earth, and then He is far above all heavens. He has been below creation, for death and hades are in a certain sense below it, and then He is above it and in this way He fills all things. We see Christ in His redemption power filling everything. All service and ministry have their place in that, and they flow from it. He has come down where Satan had his power, death and hades (called hell). He goes down where Satan's power was, and breaks it; He leads captivity captive; and He puts man in the glory of God in His own Person far above all heavens; so that He has met on the one hand the power of evil, and on the other set man in the glory of God. As Man He gets these gifts, as we were reading in the Acts, "Being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father), "he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." He has done that as Man, not merely as God, observe; but Christ, in virtue of this redemption by which He fills all things, receives the Spirit and sends Him to men whom He has rescued out of Satan's hands and builds up His church here. It gives a wonderful place to ministry.

Here in Ephesians we find the individual saints the first object, as it is said, "for (*pros*) the perfecting of the saints," and then it is added "for (*eis*) the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The first thing is that each saint should grow up to Him who is the head, that is, Christ. There are three objects. One object is first of all distinct. There is a different preposition in Greek. He does all things "for the perfecting of the saints" (there He is the first-born of many brethren); and it has these additional characters, it is for work of ministry down here, and for edifying the body as a whole. You must not lose sight of the

individual when you get into the body. He carries on the perfecting of the saints to the end of verse 15, and in verse 16 He comes to ministry and building up of the body. " Till we all arrive at the unity of the faith" (that is, each individual, of course) " and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ " (nothing short of that) ; " that we be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of that teaching which is in the sleight of men, in unprincipled cunning with a view to systematised error ; but holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ." There we see individuals, and they grow up to Christ. Then he goes on—" From whom the whole body [now we have the corporate thing] fitted together and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part, worketh for itself the increase of the body to itself—building up in love." That is the second thing, or additional aim. First, the individual saints grow up to the Head in everything, and, secondly, the building up of the body. It is the body building itself up ; but still it is service and ministry. It is wonderful grace that He who went into the lower parts of the earth has gone to glory and has done this immense thing—put the saints in personal connection with Him.

The prayer in chapter 3 is wonderful, " that he might give you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." He asks that the power of the Holy Spirit might work in the heart of the individual, and that Christ might be in the affections, " that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," that is, that Christ may be realised by faith. I have now got Christ—who is the centre of the whole universe of blessedness—dwelling in my heart. Thus I have the centre in me, and this is perfect love sure enough, for we are dwelling in God and God in us ; and thus rooted and grounded in love. Being there my heart takes in all the saints, " rooted and grounded in love that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints." You cannot leave them out, for they form part of this plan of God, the nearest circle to Christ. Then, getting the whole scene of God's glory and purpose, we apprehend the breadth and length and depth and height, that is, the whole scene of God's glory. All the glory that God surrounds Himself with we have

by having Christ in the heart, by faith realised in the power of the Spirit. But as we might be lost in this glory, we get back to Christ with whom we are familiar, and he prays that we may " know the love of Christ which surpasseth knowledge." We find in this galaxy of glory ourselves perfectly intimate with the Person that is the centre of it all. He dwells in the heart, and we know the love of Christ. Accordingly this does not narrow, but really quite the contrary, because it passes knowledge. Therefore He says, " to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." We have what surrounds God in the glory, and now having known the personal love of Christ we have got to God Himself. " Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." This passage is generally quoted as referring to what God can do for us. People in their prayers say (piously no doubt ; I do not attribute any harm) that God can do more than they ask or think. That is quite true, but it is not what is here. He says, " to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Thus it is a very different thing. " To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages." We are carried out into all this of which we have been speaking ; it is a power that works in us so that He is glorified in the church in all ages and of course now. That is where He sets us before He takes up the question of ministry.

The prayer is not that we might know the hope of His calling and the glory of His inheritance, but that the Father of our Lord Jesus according to the riches of His glory may strengthen us with might. It is according to all this thing in which He is glorified that He strengthens us. In the first prayer he prays that the eyes of our hearts may be opened and we may know the things that are ours. The glory is ours and the inheritance is ours. Here he comes not to what is objective, but to what works in us. The prayer is to the Father, not to God ; and He looks for Christ dwelling in our hearts. He is looking for power in us, not objects before us, " that we may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." He prays that this power may work in us, but it may not be working. He is not looking that we may know certain things that are ours, but that the things may

exist. I may not be strengthened with might in the inner man, though I may have the Spirit. It is a positive state he is praying for.

The first prayer is not a prayer for anything to work in us, but that we may see the things, and He puts the things before us as objects. The things are ours. We have got the calling: we are partakers of the heavenly calling, as it is said in Hebrews, and if we have not got the inheritance actually, we are joint-heirs with Christ. He prays that the eyes of our hearts may be opened so that we may look at these things, but they are ours. It is wonderful that the Holy Ghost cannot shew us anything of glory that is not ours. The power spoken of at the end of the chapter which does the work in us, is a power that has taken us when dead sinners and put us in the Christ where He is. But this is all settled. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." There we find that you who were dead in sins He has quickened. That is the power that has wrought and made a Christian of me. Here is chapter 3 he is praying that the power may work in us now. Practically it is the realisation of it.

In chapter 4 is one of the three "worthys" in the walk. We are called to walk worthy of God who has called us to His kingdom and glory; we are called to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; and here we are called to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, that is, the habitation of God through the Spirit—the whole thing, but specially the last part. They are all brought into unity, reconciled to God, brought together as the habitation of God through the Spirit. Here he tells them to walk worthy of that calling. It is striking how he goes on directly to lowliness and meekness. This is the walk that is worthy of the vocation. We would feel our own nothingness if we thought of this place. It is very simple if we could take it practically. He has made us all one by the Spirit; we are all builded together like stones in a house; and He looks to us walking in that unity and the spirit of peace. We are to walk in the sense of these great things and of our own nothingness.

There is threefold unity, one body, one Spirit, and ourselves called in one hope of our calling. We then get the outward profession, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; and afterwards a still greater circle—one God and Father of all, above all, and through all, and in you all. In other words, we get unity of the Spirit, the unity of the lordship, and the unity in connection with one God and Father. It is the Spirit, the Lord, and God, as you find it in 1 Corinthians, where he speaks of gifts, diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; diversities of administrations, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, but the same God that worketh all in all. It is not Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; this is not the thought, though it is connected with it, but the Spirit and Lord and God. You have the Spirit, the active agent down here, the Lord under whose authority the work is carried on, and after all, it is a divine thing—the same God that works all in all. So it is in the Corinthians, but just the same principle as here. There is a difference between the gifts there and here, and a very important difference, though here as there the Spirit and the Lord and God. We have the Holy Ghost down here; then Christ as Man in glory (He is more than that, but still He is Man; God has made Him Lord and Christ; He has got an official place. It is not that He has not a human nature, and a divine nature: that is all true; but He has an official place): one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Then follows a wider larger circle, one God, who is above all, through all, and (bringing it back to the internal power) He is in *us* all. Scripture is remarkably correct. Pantheism puts God into everything, and makes it all God; but Paul gives us the truth.

Next we come to "everyone of us." Each of us has his own special niche; we all fill some little service, whatever it is. "Unto every one of us is given grace": it is individualised. It is to every member of the body.

"Every one" is contrasted with that unity. He takes them first all as one thing, and then He takes them separately. It is according to the measure of the gift of Christ. We have Christ the giver now. You do not get this in 1 Corinthians 12; and the difference is an important one practically. There it is the Holy Ghost come down and distributing divinely. The Holy Ghost distributes to every man severally as He will, and therefore in the Corinthians they are merely looked at as powers. Must a man necessarily speak with a tongue because

he is able to speak with it? No, says Paul, you must think of the building up of the church; everything must be done to edification. If the gift you have does not edify, you must be quiet. If there is no interpreter, you are not to speak. That is, we have power, but power subject to the ordering authority of the Lord in the church of God. They were speaking two or three at a time. They said they were all speaking by the Holy Ghost, and they thought they must utter what they had got to say. "No," says the apostle, "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." There must be order. There was power, but this power was restrained and authorised by the God of order. The possession of power was no proof that the person possessing it was to exercise his power; he was only to exercise it when it would edify the church. In consequence we find in the Epistle to the Corinthians what are called sign-gifts. There are no miraculous gifts in Ephesians, whereas in 1 Corinthians appear healings, miracles, tongues and various signs of power, which you do not get here. There it is the Holy Ghost down here. Here we have Christ on high caring for His own body, and looking for its edification, and hence we have only those gifts which are permanent for its good. The apostles and prophets were the foundation. The foundation is not being laid now; but the other gifts are given till we all come to the unity of the faith, to a full-grown man. That is, it is not a mere question of power, but of the faithfulness of Christ to His own body, the assembly, which He nourishes and cherishes as a man does his own flesh.

The word "gift" has a double sense. If you do not see this, you might be apt to take it in verse 7 as if it was Christ that is given. It denotes the giving as well as the thing given. Grace is merely a favour given, as a special grace conferred in giving a man such a qualification from Christ for service. To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. That is, I have got this grace, this thing that is conferred upon me, in the measure Christ has given it. You cannot say grace is given me to use a gift when the grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

The grace is the gift. It is according to the measure of the giving of Christ that He gave this. If grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ, everyone would have perfect grace according to the gift He had given.

It is character, it is God's grace given; but it is a gift,

whatever it may be. " To me is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

It is tantamount to every member of the body having a gift. Also He makes a distinction between permanent gifts and what every joint supplies. He does not give pastorship, He gives pastors. This is not unimportant, because Paul a prophet was not always prophesying, though always a prophet, and he was an apostle, though not always exercising his apostleship. Therefore Christ does not give apostleship but apostles. Taking it as such given to him, it is a certain position and place of service given to him, and he is that. Christ ascends up on high and gives him. In Psalm 68 it is said that, when He ascended up on high, He received gifts in man. The point is, that Christ as a man has gone up and is a giver. It is the measure of the gift of Christ, not of the Holy Ghost, though it operates by the Holy Ghost.

Supposing I say I give to you an act of pastorship to-day, and that is all about it. This is not the case here. He gives the man as a pastor, and he is always a pastor, though God might deprive him of it if He liked. The man has that place and function. Paul was always an apostle. It was not a certain thing that came upon him and was gone, but he was an apostle always. When we get to the power of the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians, we read that God " set in the church first apostles, then prophets " ; but it is much more an action of the Holy Ghost present down here as power.

Here then we find what we have referred to already—we come to the immense truth, Christ going down to the place of death, His soul to hades, and His body to the grave ; and then going far above all heavens and filling everything. Having led captivity captive, He now comes in power, and makes other men the instruments of His power. Then, being so exalted, He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, etc.

There are first the apostles and prophets. They are passed away, but we have their writings, and these are precious. I mean we have not their personal presence, but are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets ; and of course there is no foundation to be laid now. Then he takes that which must come first to have the church, for you cannot have pastors and teachers till you have had an evangelist to

bring people there to be nourished. You see the foundation must be laid first, whence you have apostles and prophets first. Then how are you to get souls to be taught if there are no evangelists? "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Hence evangelists come next. It is a most blessed gift. I think more of evangelists than of pastors and teachers. They face the world more for Christ. Still I believe a pastor is a rare gift. The work of the evangelist is simpler. He stands in the face of the world for Christ. A pastor must be like a doctor; he must know the right food, and the right medicine, and the right diagnosis, and all the pharmacopœia, and must know how to apply it too. In one sense it is a rare gift, and very precious.

Pastor and teacher are distinct things, but they are in Greek (and indeed in English) joined. They are connected, but not absolutely one, because a pastor includes in a certain sense the other; whereas a teacher has nothing to do with the office of pastor, so as to care for souls. I might expound the scripture, and yet not really have wisdom to deal with individual souls as a pastor has to do. That of pastor is a wider gift. Still they are closely connected, because you could hardly profit an individual without teaching him in a measure. A person may teach without being a pastor, but you can hardly be a pastor without teaching in a certain sense. The two gifts are closely connected, but you could not say they are the same thing. The pastor does not merely give food as the teacher; the pastor shepherds the sheep, leads them here and there, and takes care of them. I think it is a thing greatly wanted, but I believe it is a rare gift and always was. Pastors must have a heart for the sheep. There are degrees of completeness in it, but that is what the pastor has to do. The testimony is in the evangelist, but his work is simpler. He carries the gospel to the poor sinner, whereas the pastor has saints on his heart and cares for them.

One has taken some comfort out of the thought that the evangelist was not so important, for God would be sure to do the work. But it is not the way the apostle put it, for he says, "How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" There is nothing like going to the word of God. God can do anything He pleases in that way, I have no doubt; still His ordinary way is by preaching.

The extent of an evangelist's work is to announce the glad

tidings. It extends till they receive Christ and remission of sins. The evangelist throws the net into the sea, and it gathers of every kind, and then the fishermen put the good fish into vessels. It is the same figure in that parable. No distinction is made there. The net is drawn to shore at the close of the dispensation. Their business was good fish. They got a lot of bad ones into the net, and they put the good ones into vessels. Hence it is now a question of sorting. Then an evangelist distinguishes between those truly converted and those not. That parable speaks in general of all. Those that were pulling at the nets were putting in the vessels too.

But the evangelist has nothing to do inside the church as an evangelist. A man may not be a public speaker very much, but there will be evangelising going on, if there is much life. Saints always rejoice in the truth. There is a great deal of the teaching gospel now. Saints want the gospel very often as much as sinners (I mean the clear plain gospel); and therefore what I call a teaching gospel really has its place. It is another kind of thing from what awakens the sinner.

It is a mixture of a teacher's and evangelist's work. You will hear one man praying and beseeching God to bring in poor sinners, and you will hear another praying that Christ may be glorified in His sheep; the one in principle has a pastor's heart, and the other an evangelist's. You thus see where a man's heart is. The one is for people outside, and the other's desire is that Christ's sheep may glorify Him.

Owing to the perverse teaching which is abroad, you have to get converted people to the gospel. It is not the same thing as going out to the highways and hedges, and compelling them to come in. To such one would preach not only about their sins, but the grace of Christ for them in their sins. Romans 3 comes before chapter 7; but I was in the seventh before I got to the third, because I had nobody to preach to me. The first thing a person wants to know is that he is guilty, and when he knows his guilt in his conscience and his responsibility, the blood of Christ meets it, and there is forgiveness and cleansing.

Recollect we are talking about preaching the gospel when all the world professes to believe in Christ. When Peter preached the gospel to the Jews, he says, You have crucified and slain Him, and God has raised Him from the dead. You go and tell a sinner in the street that God has raised Him

from the dead, and he will say, " I know that as well as you." They preached facts then. I believe that the gospel is really a great deal more powerful when we preach or bring forward the great facts of the gospel. There is immense power in these facts ; but at the same time in the ordinary sense they are admitted, and hence you have to press their power and value upon people. When they went to heathens first, they told them that God had sent His Son into the world, that the world had crucified Him, and that God had raised Him. If you tell that to people now, they do not deny it. We have now to take the other part, " Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." This is the effect of it. I believe the more facts are brought forward by the evangelist, the more power will be in his testimony.

It is not always knowledge. If a man has just got his soul saved, he is sometimes more in earnest than one who is a long time saved. You find persons just converted in that aspect better evangelists than others. But then you must bear in mind that we are evangelising in Christendom, we are not going to Hindoos or Chinese. If you do not take account of that, you will have a very superficial gospel. Evangelising in Christendom is not evangelising in heathendom ; it is in worse case if you please.

But take a fact, when a man's sins are brought forward and you press it upon him—you shew him Christ. It is not the teaching that does the thing ; it is a certain character of gospel that deals with the condition of soul, and after it they cannot go on with what they have got.

The parable in Matthew 13 is descriptive of the kingdom of heaven, how it goes on. You do not get directions how to do it, nor will directions ever do. If you want an evangelist, you must get a man who has love for souls ; and counsel as to the manner of it would never do anything. Of course I may suggest to another ; that is very well in its place. But the thing to be desired is a fervent spirit and love to souls.

The gospel is the glory of His grace. I get a much clearer gospel in its first elements if I know the glory. It is a more teaching gospel. I may say, How can you stand before God in glory ? and Christ is in glory ; and if you look to Christ, and He has borne your sins, they must be gone ; for He has not got them in glory. This is the thing that gives peace to the conscience. I might take the coming of the Lord and

present it as terror, and it might be used to awaken the conscience, and there is nothing done till conscience is awakened. It is a bad sign to receive the word at once with joy, unless there has been a previous work. You must have one consciously brought into God's presence, or you will never have anything real. There is no bringing the soul to God except by the conscience; because a man cannot be in God's presence without his conscience being awakened. What a preacher has to do is to bring the light to bear on a man's conscience, and make him thus find himself out in the light.

There may be a preliminary work—what the old Puritans call the common operations of the Spirit. There may be appeals to the conscience, which may have reached it, and the soul going on as before. The conscience may be reached, and a man may be quickened, or he may not; and the conscience may be reached and bring out the bitterest enmity against God. The consciences of the people whom Stephen addressed were reached, and made them gnash with their teeth. When God quickens, the conscience is reached, and the man is made to feel he is a sinner. The conscience may be reached, however, without that inward work as well as with it.

Whenever the Holy Ghost works, it produces a want. In Nicodemus's case, it went on to quickening. You have the words, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." It is not His work in the sense of saving or quickening, but the conscience is reached. That is the reason why the Puritans call such the common operations of the Spirit.

There is a conscience in every man. The fall of a tree may alarm a conscience. If God accompanies it in grace as He did in the case of Luther, whose friend was killed by a flash of lightning, the work is effectual. You see men alarmed and plunge into greater wickedness to get rid of it. They are distinct things, though they may go together.

In the last of the seven parables the gospel is the net that takes the fish. But then they caught bad fish as well as good. It is all God's work, but He employs workmen. Not only God works, but He works alone as to everything good. The net is cast into the sea. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" is what God says. I quite admit God will have His own. Scripture is plain upon it, but He has His way of doing things. His ordinary way is by the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. "Faith cometh by hearing, and

hearing by the word of God." This is the ordinary rule of God. I see two ways of God's love manifested. One is His own essential blessedness in Himself; He gives us to enjoy this in communion by the Spirit. There is another thing in God, and that is, the activity of love towards those that have no communion with Him; and He gives us a part in it too. And the fact that He acts by instrumentality, as He speaks here, is an enormous blessing. He leaves poor creatures like us a part in this activity of saving souls. If it is man's work, it is good for nothing.

Servants are addressed in Luke 14, " Go and compel them to come in." And the point insisted on there is that, when the Jews would not come in, He would have the Gentiles. He first went and took the poor Jews, the poor of the flock, and brought them into His house, but they did not fill it, and then He sends to the Gentiles. He does not speak of whom He sends out.

But I do not think you will ever teach anybody to be a good evangelist; he must have it from God. He must have the love of souls in his heart. If he lean on the Lord, he will win souls.

You cannot have the church without the evangelist. Looked at as an evangelist, you see his point of departure is the church because he is a member. When things were right, the power went from the centre and gathered into that centre. " The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." All gifts are independent of the church; they are all dependent on Christ. All service is simply to Christ. I quite admit discipline. If a man teaches wrong, he must be disciplined; but the service is to Christ. They are all for the Lord, and I believe the Lord would add them to the church if things were in order. The church is what is formed upon earth in which He is to be glorified. It is where He glorifies Himself now in the world, and therefore the evangelist gathers people in. This is all true; but when you take the person of an evangelist or pastor, he is Christ's servant. He is a great deal happier if he goes in fellowship with the assembly, but the fact of evangelising is not the assembly's act. The assembly will not go on well, unless there is a spirit of evangelising in it, to which the love of Christ will constrain them. I quite admit that which has taken place in connection with revivals: the action which converted, and that which gathered, have been in a

measure disconnected. I see clearly in the operations at the beginning that they went together. The Lord then added to the church daily such as should be saved. This was the regular order of things.

At the beginning there was the church which God had set up and power was there. They commend Paul to God, and he comes back and tells what God has done by his means. There is action and reaction, but now this has all got dislocated. You are in an immense thing called the church, which is far indeed from Christ. Therefore there is this difficulty for a man who feels pressed to go and speak to souls, when he does not know there is such a thing as the body of Christ. If a man was a heathen or Jew and became a Christian, he was added to the church, but that is not the case now; and therefore it requires more real power and wisdom to do the work rightly now, and not simple power merely which evangelises the sinner.

We had most happy exercise of heart about it in ——. When they first went out, they did not know anything about the body of Christ. They went and devoted themselves to people that were gathered, some going to the world and some to sects, as they knew no better. The work goes on more slowly, but a great deal more solidly. They did not cease to evangelise, but it was more connected with Christ outside the world. It told more healthfully. After all there is as much real work done and a better kind of work. A difficulty arises that we are not preaching to heathens. If you go to China or India, the persons converted to Christ come amongst those Christians that are there. If you go and convert a man now, and he belongs to the Independents or Presbyterians or Methodists, he goes on with them. The man belongs to Christ, but the whole thing is lost in a morass. By a clear gospel the person will get hold of things that will make it impossible to go on as he had been doing; he will be led to consider that to continue as he had been doing will not do. It is one of the reasons that hindered me from preaching in dissenting places, that the gospel I preached tends to break the whole system to pieces. How can a man who believes me preaching that by one offering he is perfected for ever, go and listen to a man that is dinning about the law every day? If he does, the condition of his soul is lowered. I might not have been talking of any particular doctrines or separation from the

body to which he belonged—and never would so speak; yet the preaching of a really full gospel would (if received) bring a man necessarily to that centre.

If you preach a full gospel, it will tell in the way described. It will gather to Christ without effort or persuasion. Indeed I never could and never did make one Christian leave the systems. I believe that there are people among the poor Roman Catholics that will go to heaven. But there is one thing wrong, and that is all those divisions; for I defy anybody to shew me such a thing in the word of God as what is now called the church. One must come out of confusion. But, further, we are told to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The gift of a pastor is a rare one. Could anyone exercise the office of a pastor without having a gift, that is, do a pastor's work without being specially gifted? He will do it very badly if he has not got the gift. If he does it really, he has got the gift—he cannot do it really without that. It is possible that I did not quite convey what I meant. In the present state of things is the work of a pastor done in any way by any one who has not the gift of a pastor, or can it be? Much depends on the spirit of the thing. You may have him in the place and office, but he cannot do the work of a pastor because he has not got the gift. Supposing a person says, I do not profess to have the gift of a pastor, and yet I must look after souls as well as I can? One has no objection to that, for it is brotherly love. If you get a person in brotherly love doing what he can, it is very well: we all ought to care one for another. A very young Christian cannot do as much as an older one, but in a certain sense everybody ought to care for his brother. In verse 16 after the chief positive gifts, evangelists, pastors and teachers, which go on to the end, you get "from whom," that is, Christ, "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." That is what you refer to. One has not a specific gift and office, but he does whatever he can do. "Fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying itself in love." Here then all the members have something or other. They have each their place and service: one may exhort, one may have a little word of wisdom and never appear in public at all. There is

that which " every joint supplieth." It is real and approved of Christ.

It is connected with verse 7 of course : only there he spreads that out into these gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers ; and then he goes on to what " every joint supplieth." You first get the positive gifts. A person may evangelise, though he be not actually an evangelist ; he may take an opportunity of speaking for Christ. Compare Acts 8 : 4.

I leave every person to his own conscience as to places where he may be free to evangelise. At first I preached in every church or chapel where I was permitted ; but I found it was not a good plan. If I saw a man preaching the gospel honestly or fully in the streets and there was opposition, I could identify myself with him without asking who he was or where he came from ; but this is a different thing from planning to go out with him. I could not ; but I leave every person free. You cannot control any man's conscience ; you may advise him. I do not conceal that I am outside the camp. It makes people angry sometimes ; but I am deliberately outside the camp, altogether and totally, and I think I know what I am about from Scripture. If I go there, I mix myself up with what is in the camp, and I give an uncertain sound. My deliberate judgment is that in the present state of the church of God one should be outside these connections. I think it is all going on to judgment as fast as it can, and it is not charity to go on with it so as to enfeeble the testimony. I have seen it going on these forty or fifty years nearly, with persons attempting to go on with it ; and I have never seen such persons either grow up into the truth or make others clear in their walk. After an experience of many years I am perfectly clear in my judgment about it.

As to how far one could wish God speed to or have fellowship with any work going on outside, if I knew of a person preaching Christ even of contention, I would rejoice as the apostle says. I could not go and join with a man that was doing it in contention, yet I am glad he is preaching Christ.

With certain preachers I would not have fellowship for special reasons. It is a matter of discipline. I separate between having fellowship with Christ preached and co-operating with the men that preach. Do you think I should join with a man

that preaches from contention? I am glad he is doing it in one sense, because Christ is made known by it.

In this way I can own all ministry where it is true, apart from recognising a man in the sense of co-operating. It is the thing that gives a character to the evangelising itself. My experience is that it is not the way to get souls on. I have seen both done. I have seen brethren doing it; of course they stand or fall to their own Master. I would go with them in preaching the gospel, but not with the camp. I think it is a great thing for our souls to get hold of—you cannot expect the newly converted soul to get hold of it at once—that there is this immense system, "the camp," which is not of God, though there are many people of God in it. Therefore you must leave individuals to judge in each case. But that which associates me with it I cannot do. It would be building again the things I destroyed. If I am to associate myself with it, why did I leave it? I never should attack anybody nor ask anybody to come. I never would and never did; but I am not going to be driven out of what is plain in Scripture.

There is no true Christian that has not something or other given him for service in the body, merely perhaps a little bit of wisdom. Everybody has got something for service to the body, as a hand or foot or eye; but not everybody a prominent gift as a pastor or evangelist. Everybody has got something according to the measure of what Christ has given him; and if he go beyond that measure, it will be mere human action or no good at all.

We now come to the ordinary exhortation as to walk. He shews the state they were in—ignorance and sin. "As the truth is in Jesus"; it is not doctrine, though doctrine is contained in it. The truth as it is in Jesus is the having put off the old man and put on the new—this having been done by faith. Then he adds, "and being renewed in the spirit of your mind." The putting off and the putting on are not in the present tense, whereas being renewed in the spirit of your mind is. The truth is, that you have put off the old man, but you do want renewing. In Colossians (chap. 3) this is distinct: "Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new." In the Epistle to the Ephesians he is not saying directly to them what they have done, but saying what the truth is in Jesus. So it is more abstract. The truth in Jesus is having put off and having put

on. Being renewed is present; the renewing of the spirit of your mind is a thing that is always going on.

After this we get another immensely important principle in the new man, which according to God is created in "righteousness and holiness of truth." This is the character of God Himself. The first man was innocent; he was not righteous but innocent. There was no evil in him. To be righteous and holy you must have the knowledge of good and evil. God is perfectly righteous and perfectly holy. He judges with authority what is evil and good; but innocence does not know good and evil. The new man is after God. Another expression is found in the Colossians, which is of great importance—"renewed in knowledge according to the image of him that created him." There is a positive knowledge of God. It is not merely that there is an absence of sin, but I have a positive knowledge of God Himself, and it is what God is that is the character and essence of the new man.

So Peter speaks of being "made partakers of the divine nature." It is not merely that a man is born again. It is the truth as it is in Jesus. Of course a man is born again. Abraham had to be born again; but he did not know anything about putting off the old man and putting on the new. You never find this in the Old Testament. You find there the knowledge of sin working, but the Old Testament saints did not make a difference between the old man and the new. The moment that death came in, the believer and man took his place with God in Christ, I get the old man and the new.

We get here the putting on the new man, created after God in righteousness and true holiness. I have put on this new man, but then I have put off the old. It is a totally new thing. It is Christ who has died, so that the old thing is done with. For faith I have done with the flesh. I am not a debtor to the flesh; I am crucified with Christ: the old man is done with. We are quickened together with Christ. This is more than being born of God. Christ quickening as the Son of God, which He does—He quickeneth whom He will—is a different thing from being quickened with Christ as risen; because, when I am quickened with Christ as risen, I have left all that is the old thing behind me and have gone into a resurrection-state. The old man is crucified with Christ. This is of all importance as being one of the two great elements of Christian walk. These are, first, the putting off the old

man and the putting on the new; secondly, that the Holy Ghost dwell in us and we are not to grieve Him. These are the two grounds of Christian walk in Ephesians.

To be made partakers of the divine nature is the moral character of it. It is after God; it is the pattern of what God is. God is righteous and God is holy; and now it is not merely setting us up as innocent, but we, being actually partakers of the divine nature, have a character according to what He is. It is after God, created in righteousness and holiness.

It is morally like God's nature, but still, that might be rather a bold way of saying it. Morally it is the same; else you could not delight in Him. He chose us in Christ that we should be "holy and without blame before him in love," which is God's nature. He is holy, He is blameless, He is love. And so it is with Christ. If you look at Him down here, He was holy and blameless, and He was here in love. So in Hebrews "he that sanctifieth," that is Christ, "and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

But the putting off the old man we had better not pass over. The Christian, in virtue of Christ's death and having Christ as his life, as a Christian does not own the flesh at all. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, but he does not own it. He has not to die to sin but to reckon himself dead, Christ having died and all being available for him. What Christ has done he reckons himself to have done in this respect. How can you be alive? I say I am not, but Christ lives in me. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." We have put off the old man (not, are to put it off), that is, if we have heard Him and have been taught of Him. Besides, this new man is after God.

Observe the two in Romans 8. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (that is, the new man) "hath made me free from the law of sin and death; for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." When Christ was on the cross, He not only bore our sins and put them away, but God condemned sin in the flesh there, so that I see it is all put off. Faith reckons it. Christ died to sin; He is the only Person that died to sin; so God reckons us alive unto God, not in Adam, but in Jesus

Christ our Lord. My life in which I live is not flesh: "ye are not in the flesh," but in Christ. When you come to realise it, you take the putting off first; you say I have put off the old man—I am not a child of Adam—and put on the new man, that is, Christ. In short I believe in the testimony of 1 John 5 where it is said, "this is the record [or, testimony] that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." It is entirely a new thing in Christ; and as a proof that eternal life is not in Adam but in Christ, he shews the Spirit, and the water, and the blood—what has living power and what cleanses, what expiates—all coming consequent upon Christ's death. The water came out of His dead side, as did also the blood, while the Spirit came after He was glorified. These are all witnesses that eternal life is not in the first man but in the Second. I reckon myself dead, I am crucified with Christ. Thus it is a nature that is after God Himself. Then we get another element—the Holy Ghost dwells in me, and I am not to grieve Him.

The putting off of the old and the putting on of the new occur at the same time really; but practically, when you come to details, you find you have the one first, and then you realise the other. In real truth you put on the new man first. When you come to practice, you have to treat the old thing as dead, and the other comes free. In point of fact we must get the new man in order to treat the old man as dead. If the old man was treated as dead first, I would have no man at all. When I have got Christ as my life, I come to look at myself, and it is all over with the old man. There are many who own that they must be born again, but they do not recognise that they put off the old man. The moment I have got the death and resurrection of Christ, I say I am not a debtor to the old man. This is not merely the fact of being born again; it is not merely saying I am born again, but the other thing I have put off, that is, to faith.

Of course the old man is part of the old creation. "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation." We are the first-fruits of His creatures. "He has begotten us that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." When he speaks of dealing with the condition I am in, which you do not get here but in Colossians, which is a little lower, he does not say, Mortify the old man, but your members which are upon earth.

He does not allow any life but Christ—" Your life is hid with Christ in God." " Ye are dead " ; now mortify (that is, put to death) your members. This implies power. It is never dying to sin, but that I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, and therefore I can mortify.

Romans 8 : 13 (" Ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body "), and Colossians 3 : 5 (" mortify your members ") are but a different way of expressing the same thing. In Romans we are not viewed as risen with Christ, whereas in Colossians and Ephesians we are. In Romans we are presented as dead with Christ, because the object of Romans never is to take us out of our place in this world. It shews us that we are in Christ, but at the same time still here ; whereas in Colossians the apostle will not let them be alive in the world. " Why," he says, " as alive in the world, are ye subject to ordinances ? " All ritualism flows from not knowing we are dead.

Then we get another immensely important element, namely, that God dwells in us—the Holy Ghost ; for we are told, " Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." The Christian is to do nothing that displeases God who dwells in him. You have no mortifying the members here in Ephesians. It is a new creation and nothing else. The epistle to the Colossians does not go as far as that to the Ephesians. In the former you get us risen, but not sitting in heavenly places as in the latter.

If Romans puts us into Jordan, it does not go on to the coming out of Jordan. Colossians puts us up on the bank ; but Ephesians takes us and sets us down in Canaan to eat the old corn of the land where there is no manna any more. You cannot say they are a figure of that, it is going into details, which the figure does not. You get a figure of the whole thing that I have passed through Jordan. I am not in the wilderness, but am in heavenly places, and seated there in Christ ; and not till then do I get circumcised. You get this in Colossians. There are two things in the Romans : man is dealt with, looked at as alive in sin ; and death is brought in—Christ's death. By Christ's death their guilt is gone, and by it also they died. They are in Christ, but they are looked at as persons that have died, though not risen with Him. In the Ephesians, although the fact is looked at, as to the doctrinal statement, they are not looked at as alive in sin ; they are dead in sins, which is another aspect of it, but the same state.

When I am alive in sins I am dead towards God; there is not a single movement of thought, heart, or feeling in that state towards God. God can create me over again spiritually. Ephesians looks at a man as dead in sins, and says we are created in Christ Jesus. It is not justifying sinners there.

The man is justified in Romans; he is a new creation entirely in Ephesians; while in Colossians you get both. In the latter there is death and the new creation, but not yet seated in heaven. They are looked at as on the earth, and there is a hope laid up for them in heaven—" ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." In chapter 2 : 11, 12, we read, " In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism [there I get the doctrine of Romans], wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead [I have now got beyond the Romans]. And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him." There we get Colossian doctrine, but it does not take us up to heaven. When he speaks of that in Ephesians he says, " He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Colossians is, as it were, between Romans and Ephesians. Therefore in Colossians you get, instead of sitting in heavenly places, " set your affections on things above," " the hope that is laid up for you in heaven," and such expressions. He does not talk of the Holy Ghost in Colossians. What we find in Colossians is life, and this is as important in its place as the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. In Ephesians you get the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and therefore the body; whereas in Colossians you never get the Holy Ghost mentioned except in the expression " your love in the Spirit." For example, in Ephesians we read, " Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another," whereas in Colossians he says, " Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Instead of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, it is God's nature the measure of how we are to behave ourselves.

The Holy Ghost works in the new nature, but is not said to dwell in it. It is said, that " Christ may dwell in your

hearts by faith." The Holy Ghost operates in the new nature. Still the dwelling is never spoken of as in it, but in the body; we need Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith.

I have got a new nature, and of course have not to pray to get one. The effect of this is most striking. In the Ephesians we are brought to sit in heavenly places, we have put off the old man and put on the new, and we have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us. In Ephesians it is, "As God in Christ hath forgiven you." We have got the nature, the state that I am in, to be able to walk: we have put off the old and put on the new; and the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and then we are told to be imitators of God as dear children. If it be said, How can we talk of imitating God (of course it is not Almighty power, but refers to moral things), how can poor worms such as we talk of imitating God? I answer, is not Christ your pattern? You are to follow that. This shews the absurdity of making it merely the law as our rule of life. If a dear child of God, I am to have a sense of it in my soul and exhibit it in my walk; I am "to walk in love as Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"; we are to go and walk as He walked.

We have had the two subjective elements (that is, the state I am in) consisting of the new man, and the old man put off, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Then follow as a measure the two essential names of God—love and light. This is what Christ was in this world. "While I am in the world," He says, "I am the light of the world," and He was the expression of divine love. You are to be an imitator of God, and if you ask, How can that be carried out in man? you get Christ, that is, God manifested in a man. How clearly the thing is entirely above law! If law was carried out in the world, we should have the world all happy, and righteous, and peaceful; but this supposes the world to be all right. I am to care for another as much as for myself, but that will not do in this world, and therefore I get this, "He gave himself." It is not taking love to self as the measure of love to my neighbour, but going beyond the law, and giving oneself up for others. If all went on rightly, the law would be your rule now, but it is otherwise. As Christians, when you come to a world of wickedness, you have to follow God.

Let us look at the double character of this love, which is entirely practical. There are two kinds—what I may call love up and love down; and they are entirely different in kind. The care of a father and his child will illustrate the difference. The father loves down, and the child loves up; the one is to something above it, whereas the other is in condescending goodness. If you take a case of loving up, the more excellent the object the more excellent the affection. If one love a base thing, it is a base affection. If one love a man of noble character, it is a noble affection. If one love God, of course, it is the highest of all. Then on the other hand, if you take love down, the baser the object the greater the love. Such is the character of God's love to us. We get both in Christ. He loved His Father perfectly as Man (which was loving up), and He loved us when vile sinners (which was loving down); and we are to go and do likewise. Therefore I read here "as Christ hath loved us and given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." He gave Himself *for* us and *to* God. This is perfection. He had an infinitely high object, and an infinitely low one, and He was perfect both ways. We have to seek to walk as He walked. There is fellowship also one with another. Of course when we can see, the thing to imitate is Christ walking in love—"as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God."

This is the side of love wherein you are imitators of God. Then you get the other essential name of God, and that is, light; which he says we are too. We are partakers of the divine nature—"ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." God is love, and God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. We were darkness, but now in Christ we are light in the Lord. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light." I get the full light in Christ, also the full love. Thus are the two essential names of God brought out. I am a partaker of the divine nature, and the Spirit of God dwells in me, and I am to act as God acted, and that acting was in Christ. "Awake, thou that sleepest," that is, looking at Christians, not committing sins, but gone to sleep in the world. In the world the people are all dead: but if a man goes to sleep, he is just as much alive as when awake, but he is as much as dead; he does not hear, nor speak, nor think; he is like a dead man. Look at the Christian that is

going on with the world—he is with the dead. What am I to do, then? Christ is the light of the world, and "ye are the light of the world," He says to His disciples. It is a wonderful exhibition.

In 1 John it is said, "If we walk in the light," that is, absolutely; but, realising position, we walk in it. It is position; we are actually there. It is not like standing in righteousness. Here he is looking at practice. Walking is a real thing. It is not as if I say, Christ is my righteousness. It is a real living place we are walking in. Of course he judges in detail all sins. All the Gentiles are walking in darkness—I refer to the passage in Ephesians. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but wise." Uprightness is not sufficient. If I have to go through a bog, I may be perfectly sincere in seeking a house on the other side; but if I do not look about me, I may sink in the bog. I must look about me. It requires wisdom to go through this world, I mean as a Christian.

The expression "redeeming the time" is apt to be always misapplied. It means seizing opportunities. You get it in Daniel 2, where the king speaks to the Magi: "I know ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me." They wanted to redeem the time. Here I am to walk in such a way, so full of Christ, that, when an opportunity offers, I can bring Him out. The days are evil. You cannot always have an opportunity; you might be casting pearls before swine; but you must be in a condition to embrace every opportunity. In Daniel it is "gain the time," or as in the margin "buy" the fit moment. A thousand more opportunities would present themselves of bringing Christ before people if we were living in the power of the Spirit of God. The days are evil, we are told. The power of evil is there. You must not complain because the days are evil. The Lord can guide us through one day as well as another.

"Instant in season" is to the saint. The time will come when they will not receive sound doctrine. This applies to the dealing with the saints. It is often applied to the gospel; but the mischief is, that people take passages without reading the context. I am sure we could find a great many more seasons if we were faithful to Christ. "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, for the time will come when

they will not endure sound doctrine ; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears ; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables." He is evidently looking to Christians. Timothy was to go on earnestly pressing, because soon they would not listen to him. Whether it were seasonable or not, he was to go on with it, because very soon there would be no season at all.

I do not think the apostle here means the gospel. The previous chapter speaks of the departure. He is speaking of the evil days. It is not that we are not to be preaching everywhere we can to sinners, but the special thing he has in his mind is that the church would get into such a state that they would not listen to truth. When we preach the gospel now, we preach to people that call themselves Christians. You may meet infidels, it is true. It is of the last days he is speaking. In John's time they were come in. It was the last time then, though morally developed since. Peter says, " The time is come that judgment will begin at the house of God," and Jude says, that these men " have crept in unawares," and also that these are they that the Lord comes to judge.

The latter times bring it up to the last days, being the more general term : " In the latter days some shall depart from the faith," and in the last days they shall have a form of godliness. It is rather more distinctly characteristic ; because in John you get the last days marked by antichrists being there. He does not use them to say they are the last of the latter. In the latter days you get celibacy and asceticism, as it is called ; so the apostle shews in Colossians. He speaks of that system which was already dawning. God allowed it all to begin before the apostle went, that we might have scripture upon it. It ripened afterwards. Therefore he speaks of the latter days as those coming in after he was gone. They are used in the Old Testament pretty much in the same sense. Still the last days are more definite. " As ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists."

We had before the oppositions of science, falsely so called, and the forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, and we all know it is going on since. In England you can hardly go into a cathedral without finding the monument of a bishop who lived forty days without eating anything : I have seen them when I used to go into such places. Now one

may fast very profitably if one has occasion to do it. As such I recognise it: but to set about making a virtue of it in the way usually done is wrong because it went upon the principle that matter was an evil thing, and denied the atonement entirely, for they said that Christ could not have a body. This is the reason the apostle John insists He is come in flesh, and that His disciples had handled Him. It was denied that He was really a man in that way, because they thought all matter was a bad thing; and therefore the great thing to be done was to get the Spirit, which was good in everybody away from matter. Therefore they fasted to keep the matter down. This was a torment to the church. Though some of them were very strict, a great many were grossly immoral. It spread everywhere and affected even the orthodox. The Gnostics died out, but they left their taint in the church, and the whole system of celibacy and monasticism continued. I used once to fast in that way myself. On Wednesdays, and Fridays, and Saturdays I did not eat anything at all, but on the other days I did eat a little bread. I said, If I fast three days I can fast four, and if four, five, and if five, better six, and if six, better seven; and what then? I had better die. Thus there was something that made it impossible to go through with the thing. I went on with it, but God delivered me.

The Spirit of God had them in view. They were dawning then, because it says, "The Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter days some shall depart," etc. You see that evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, and that, when once the evil was introduced, it could not be put out.

It had been among the heathen before. The system of monasteries, and celibacy, and begging friars, was all in existence five hundred and forty years before Christ, and many think it was actually borrowed from the East. Certainly it is the same thing morally, but, as I said, many think it was actually borrowed from the East; as a great many of their doctrines were, I have no doubt. A Roman Catholic priest, when visiting the East, was perfectly astounded, and did not know what to think when he found among the Buddhists exactly the same things as Roman Catholics had at home. He told them he was a Lama from the west, and he was received in all their monasteries and elsewhere.

Returning to our epistle, we see that another element comes in. When we have them all in order, he says, "Be not drunk

with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Such is the joy they were to have, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." There are two things—my own will gone, and the perfect certainty of God's love. "Giving thanks always for all things": take away my fortune and I say, "Thank God." It is not easy, and of course the will must be broken; but on the other hand, God makes everything to work together for good to those that love Him. Then you get a spirit of grace, "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ." It is not submitting to do evil if you want me to do it, but that in faith there is no will. If you want me to do wrong, I cannot do it because it is not God's will, but in everything in which my will is concerned I give way to you. We are to submit to one another in the fear of Christ. It is what sitting in heavenly places produces upon earth. Christ, when here, could say He was in heaven, and He is given as our pattern, though to us it is purely by grace.

Next, there are two other main subjects that follow—the love of Christ to His church, and the conflict of the saints with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. We have passed away from what we are with God, and now we come to the special relationship of Christ with the church. The main thing in His mind is the church. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body." This I believe to be our body.

I get two things He does in consequence of His love to the church. He gave Himself for it out and out. This is the first thing He does in consequence of His love to it. Then, having taken it to be His own, He sets about to make it what He likes. He does not make what He likes to be His own, but takes it to be His own to make it what He likes. Next, I get present sanctifying and washing by the word; and afterwards His presenting it to Himself as a glorious church. This is special. It is not God loving poor sinners, but the special love of Christ to the church. The purification that we get here is that which we have in heaven; as far as it goes, it is the same nature, and quality, and standard, and measure, and everything else as will be in heaven. He washes it here that it may have no spot there. "Beholding with unveiled face

the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into the same image from glory to glory." Looking at Christ in glory our hearts get filled with the motives that are there, and this effect is produced upon earth. The effect is produced here, but the motives are all above. He " loved the church and gave himself for it." This is the starting-point—" that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the church to himself glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish." It is a great thing for us to see that the condition we are to be presented in to Christ is the power and measure of our sanctification here.

It is manifest that we find the same thing all through the epistles. For instance, " Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." I know I shall be perfectly like Christ in glory, and I purify myself according to that standard. It is not that I am pure according to it. I take that measure and apply it now. Every step I take I see it clearer, and I may apply it to something else; but this is the only thing I am looking at to judge by.

In 1 Thessalonians 3 the same truth comes out in a striking way. " The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, even as we do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." This is a passage that looks perfectly unintelligible until you get hold of what I have been saying. Instead of saying unblameable in holiness before God at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, *we* should have said, " unblameable in your walk down here." *He* looks at their realising their Christian position—" to the end he may establish your hearts," and draws the veil and there they are unblameable when Christ comes. This is where it is all measured.

But it is evidently a very important principle for this day and every other. All the perfection which is spoken of, Wesleyan or whatever it may be called, is clean gone. It does not come into the question, good or bad, because what I am shewn is the perfection of Christ in glory. I do not get it

till I am in glory, and there is no other object presented to a Christian as the standard but Christ in glory. We are to be "conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Again, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Therefore the apostle said that he had not yet attained, but there was no other thing before him. He was always running on to it. We retain in heaven the impress got here; but this is Christ. There may be degrees of realisation. We shall be perfectly like Christ when we get there; all of us will be perfectly like Him. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly. I am like a person in a straight passage with a light at the end; I have more of the light every step I take, but I do not get the light till I come to the end. When He shall appear, we shall be like Him. I get a sight of this, and say, This is what I am going to be. It sounds strange to say that we cannot be as Christ was here, because He was absolutely sinless, and if I say I have no sin I deceive myself. But I shall be like Him there, and this is brought to bear upon me now that I should have no motive working in my soul but Him there. This is what the apostle means when he says, "not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

It has been said, indeed, that God would not give a measure that we could not attain to; but I take the bull by the horns and assert that He never gave one that a man could attain to. He made man innocent, and there was no demand necessary; but the moment man becomes a sinner, God put something beyond him, which he is to run after. God gives him a law when he is in the flesh, and he is not subject to the law of God. It is an unattainable measure. Again, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." This is our measure. Are you as perfect as this? When things are fully developed, I get Christ in glory. This is perfectly unattainable here, because God wants me to be always running on and having the one thing always before me. "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The meaning of John 17 : 19 ("For their sakes I sanctify

myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth ") is, that for their sakes Christ sets Himself apart as a model man (though I do not like the expression), that we might be made into His likeness.

The passage in Hebrews 12 (" Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus ") is more the difficulties we have to encounter that he is looking at there. He says, Christ has got there; you take courage and run on. It is just the same race exactly. It is wonderful that we shall really be conformed to the image of God's Son, when we think of what we are. But it has nothing to do with our responsibility as to salvation. You are not set in this path until you are saved. Our responsibility as men, God's creatures, is not affected: as responsible men we are lost. It is over in that sense. Take, by way of illustration, a man in business who has contracted debts; suppose I go to him and tell him how he is to manage not to get into debt, he would only tell me I was mocking his misery, for he had nothing to manage. Responsibility is over in that sense; not that a man is not responsible for all he has done, but that he is ruined already, and of this the cross is the proof, because the highest act of grace is that Christ came to seek and save the lost. As to the history in Scripture, the whole system of probation concluded at the cross. " Now," said Christ, " is the judgment of this world "; as it is also said in Hebrews, " now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." When it is all over with man, sovereign grace steps in, and saves people out of their ruined condition. A person may get all his debts paid, but be left without a penny to begin the work again. God has not dealt with us in that way. He has paid our debts, and has given us the same glory as His own Son. This was a matter of His counsels before the foundation of the world; and it belongs to all Christians. There is labour which God rewards, for every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour; but in the likeness of Christ every saint will then be.

We shall all be conformed to the image of God's Son in glory. It was God's counsel before the foundation of the world, but never brought out till the cross. He " hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works [which is responsibility], but according to his own purpose and

grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." It was before the world in God's purpose about His people, but it was never brought out till Christ had laid the foundation for it in the cross. In Titus 1 there is a similar statement, " In hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised before the world began ; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching." All this glorious purpose, glorious for us and for God, never was brought out—never hinted at—until Christ laid a righteous ground for it in the cross. Then God brought it out and said, " That is what I am going to do." This with much more is what we find here in Ephesians.

But we have to notice another thing also : " No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church, for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." There I get not simply this purpose of presenting us to Himself, but how He loves and cherishes us as a man does his own flesh. It is His present care of the church. " We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." This shews that the church could not have existed at all till Christ was glorified, because it is with Christ as a man it is connected. It is not that the Son quickened us (though this is true), but that we are members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

After exhortations to children and parents, slaves and masters, there is another great subject in this Epistle, the conflicts of the saint. We do not find the conflict except in Ephesians. It is not a conflict of flesh and spirit, nor is it a conflict of conscience when a man is quickened. The Jews were slaves in Egypt as an unconverted man is in his sins. When God brought them into Canaan, were they at once to have rest ? There was conflict ; and the proper sense of conflict with Satan is for us in heavenly places.

In the Authorised Bible " high places " is inserted in place of " heavenly places," which shews that the translators were afraid of the truth, and so altered the word. A similar alteration occurs in Revelation 4. There we get One seated on a throne, and the four and twenty elders also seated on thrones ; but though the word in the original is quite the same, the translators altered the thrones of the elders into " seats." In our epistle they were afraid to translate " heavenly places," and they made

it " high places " ; but the word they have translated " high " here is the same as the one they have translated " heavenly " elsewhere, as chapter 1 : 3.

People speak of Jordan as death, and quite rightly too, for it is a figure of death ; but then is it not strange that, when they crossed over Jordan and got into Canaan, Joshua met a man with a sword drawn in his hand, and they had to fight ? Is it not strange that, as soon as heavenly places are entered, conflict has to be entered on ? Now what is Jordan ? After passing through death into these heavenly places we begin to fight. Thus it does not mean actual rest in heaven as supposed. If I say I have put off the old man, this is the same as that I am dead with Christ. I have passed through death, and been circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, and now I can fight the battles of God with Satan. This is what we get here.

Redemption brought us into the wilderness. The wilderness is our passing through this world where our flesh is tested. Canaan is the other part of the Christian's life, where he reckons himself dead. Christ in spirit is there as the Captain of the Lord's host, and He has to fight the battles of the Lord Himself. That is what we get in Canaan. I sometimes wonder that it does not strike people what an odd thing it is, that if Jordan means death, and Canaan heaven (which they do), fighting should characterise the place in Joshua, for the first thing he meets there is a man with a sword drawn in his hand. The whole book of Joshua is about the battles of the Lord. There we get death brought in, as we have been saying, reckoning ourselves dead—I am crucified with Christ. This is what Jordan is : " If ye be dead with Christ." By-and-by it will be our place of rest. Yes, heaven will be ours. I am not quarrelling with the use of the image in that way. Jordan is a type of death, and Canaan of heavenly places. In the account we get in Numbers they are going through the wilderness and tested by God ; and in Canaan they fought with flesh and blood, which is a figure of spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. We do not get there till we have passed through Jordan, that is, till we are dead and risen with Christ. This is every Christian's place ; but I speak of realising it.

The Christian is in both at the same time, but not in experience, though his condition down here affects his power of fighting. He must have the armour on. I have to go through the world with the cares of family or business, or

meeting the contradiction of sinners. But this is not a moment in which I am fighting God's battles: I am then fighting my own, so to speak. We are with God down here, or God is with us; and we fight with the devil in heavenly places. Until Revelation 12 he is in heaven. It is not where God dwells in unapproachable light; he is not there; but how could he be the accuser of the brethren if he be not in heaven? He went with the sons of God about Job, for we find Satan was amongst them. You could not have him accuser of the brethren, if he were not there. He tempts them down here, but accuses them there.

Suppose a Christian was preaching the gospel: in that would he be in wilderness circumstances? No, he is rather fighting the battle there. He might be in wilderness circumstances as to various things, but he is fighting the battles there, and he must use the wisdom of God against a subtle spiritual adversary. Suppose a man is attacked in the street and abused? You never get the question of the flesh away. When they did not consult Jehovah, they made mistakes, as in the case of Ai and Gibeon. Our contending with Satan would be against heresy, superstition, and other things. Satan may raise up opposition and violence in the streets, and hence the Christian would need wisdom; but you cannot separate the idea from having the flesh, because you will be making blunders. Thus there are doubts, and things of that kind, which Satan brings into the mind—infidelity, for instance. Satan in them acts directly; they are not mere temptations of an ordinary kind.

In this connection he adds, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." We have no strength of our own. We have nothing to do with any carnal or fleshly weapons. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." As long as the saints lean upon flesh and influence, they are not leaning on God, but flesh. The world has all the upper hand there.

Take an example in our Lord in His conflict in the wilderness. There was no sin in being hungry. This is hardly the kind of conflict; still the Lord overcomes. There was more wilderness work; still it was Satan. He too hindered the apostle from going to the Thessalonians. If one were endeavouring to make void all this truth, brought out up to this point, and say it was not true, it would be Satan's work. Infidelity, and

heresies, and things of that kind, are referred to in this warfare. In a case of discipline Paul says, " we are not ignorant of his devices." Satan was trying to divide Paul and the Corinthians, and he says, " If you forgive it, I also forgive it. I see what Satan is at: he wants to make a split between us." Error as to any doctrine is Satan's power. I merely took the other as an example. In Canaan it is not so much as a roaring lion, but he might be. " In nothing terrified by your adversaries." In the case of Paul being prevented by Satan from going to the Thessalonians, God allowed it in His providence, as He allows everything in that dealing. In the case of Job, it was God commenced the matter. He overrules all that. " We would have gone once and again, but Satan hindered us." Opposition was raised up that he could not go. All that is conflict. We do not believe enough that there is such a thing.

The rulers of the darkness of this world are Satan and his angels. The darkness of the world is ignorance of God, who is light. Conflict of Satan is not characteristic of the wilderness. If there is anything of the kind, it is an attempt to go up and get beaten. They might have gone in at Kadesh-Barnea, but they did not; and when they found how foolish they were, they attempted and were beaten altogether.

It is not what characterises the wilderness. God might give them a specimen of what they were to meet. He destroyed them unto Hormah. All our war is with the people that possess the land, that is, the devil and his angels. The wilderness is the patience of going through this world according to God. At Sinai is not the wilderness, it is totally apart. The general character of the wilderness is going through that where they had only manna and the cloud—Christ and the word and Spirit. They were to go through this world dependent on God. It is this characterises the wilderness, and not fighting. In Canaan they had not any manna. It meant characteristically the heavenly places, and the Lord set them to fight. In the type we get what characterises it. The first thing is the wiles of the devil; it is not his power here. " Resist the devil and he will flee from you." He has no power if you resist him, so far as we are concerned. His wiles are dangerous enough. " We wrestle not against flesh and blood " as Joshua did; we wrestle against wicked spirits in heavenly places. " And having done all to stand " (that is, to make good your ground), " stand therefore, having your loins girt about with

truth" : you must have the mind and affections tucked up with the word of God.

"Having on the breastplate of righteousness," that is, practical righteousness. It is not before God, but with Satan here. If I have not practical righteousness, Satan has got something against me : I am afraid. It is a good conscience I must have; my loins thoroughly tucked up and in order. I must have a good conscience and be walking in the spirit of peace.

We have not got the sword yet ; the defensive armour comes before the offensive. In that state (having a good conscience, and the spirit of grace and peace) I now come to the shield from Satan. I am to look up to God with entire confidence ; this is the shield of faith. Then comes the helmet of salvation. I can hold my head up ; and, having got all the offensive armour complete, I take the sword. The sword of the Spirit is God's word.

And then, mark further, when I have got the armour and weapon, I am thrown back in entire dependence on the Lord—praying always. The word is first of all applied to myself—I am girded with truth, and, having got the rest of the armour, the word comes into activity which is the sword of the Spirit. Lastly I am cast entirely upon God.

When I begin to take the sword, it may be service among saints or in the gospel. People have sometimes fancied that the armour of righteousness here described is Christ as our righteousness ; but this is with God. He is my righteousness with God ; but I do not want armour against God ; it is armour against wicked spirits I need. There is only one offensive weapon—the word. It is wonderful how the Lord has provided everything for us in Scripture. There is the love of Christ, who loves us like His own flesh; and the fighting with Satan follows. After we are put in our place, we get the love of Christ, and then follows the conflict with Satan.

Watching is another element in it. He says in this place, watching with prayer. If I am watching in my path in everything with God, it turns to prayer. If my heart is engaged about the blessing of the saints, I cannot get on without it. Watching in it is perseverance in it. The object of Satan is to keep us from realising these heavenly things. There is conflict for the benefit of all, as well as for ourselves. We have to put the armour on ourselves, but when we have got it on,

we must fight Satan. The first part of verse 18, namely, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication," refers to the individual, then to all saints. It is for themselves, and then it widens out. It is a general principle first. You get this constantly in the Ephesians; as for instance, "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints." The moment he gets to the thoughts and purposes of God, he cannot leave out the saints.

Confidence is in God known in Himself. I am not likely to go and ask you for something if I have not confidence in you. "The mystery of the gospel," in verse 19, includes not only the church but the whole testimony. Glad tidings take in really everything with Paul. He was a minister of the gospel in the whole creation under heaven, and a minister of the word to complete the word of God.

COMPARISON OF THE EPISTLES TO THE ROMANS AND THE EPHESIANS

An attentive consideration of the Epistle to the Romans and that to the Ephesians, will afford us some interesting light on the question of the position of the believer in Christ. The whole question of our place in Christ is viewed under a different aspect in the two epistles. I would briefly consider this. The doctrine of redeeming grace may be viewed in two ways. God's own purposes as to His children in glory may be developed on the one hand; or the condition of man portrayed, and met by grace visiting them in mercy to deliver them on the other. The Epistle to the Ephesians follows the first of these methods; the Epistle to the Romans, the second.

In Ephesians we have at once the saints blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ—placed in the blessed image of God before Him, and adopted to be His children. Redemption itself comes as a means in the second place. The knowledge of the mystery—the gathering together in one all things in Christ, and our sealing as heirs till the redemption of the purchased possession follow. The Romans, after some introductory verses, commences by the description of the dreadful state in which fallen man was, unfolding the depravity of the Gentiles, the hypocrisy of those who pretended to moralise and yet were personally no better, and finally the sad condition of the Jews, who, if they had the law, broke it. In chapter 3, at the close, grace meets this state. But this leads to the consideration of the work of grace, in each epistle, in a different way.

To speak first of the Ephesians, the sinner is seen dead in trespasses and sins—walking, doubtless, in them, but, before God, wholly dead. But even here this is not the first object presented. As chapter 1 presents the position in which the saint is placed, so the second the work which brings him into it. With this view, what is first brought before us is God's power towards us manifested in what was wrought in Christ. God had raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His right hand, far above all principality and power, above and beyond all created glory, not only in this age, but in that to come, where all hierarchies will be in their true glory and unclouded elevation, but He above and out of them all. Divine power in its exceeding greatness had brought Him from death up there.

As the origin of our life is before all worlds (John 1 ; 1 John 1), so our place before God is out of and above all worlds and creature powers. It is to be remarked here, however, that Christ Himself is looked at as already dead. The whole work is thus of God ; for Christ being dead, is looked at, of course, as Man, and this wondrous power is exerted, and He, as Man, is at God's right hand. Then the saints are brought before us, Gentiles or Jews, as alike children of wrath by nature, and are seen once utterly dead in trespasses and sins, quickened together with Him, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. The whole is entirely God's work. We are created again. It is not living men who have to be dealt with, who are without law and under law, must die with Christ, and are set free by death. They are found dead in sins, and we get the perfect full blessing of the work, because it is entirely God's. Man is for nothing therein, for what has he to do with creation ? He is created ; all that man (that is, the believer) is is God's work. Hence, also, remark, we have peace, making nigh, reconciling, exalting to sit in heavenly places in Christ, but not justifying ; because it is a living, responsible, existing man who has to be justified before God. But we have Christ exalted, and ourselves exalted in Him. It is God's work in Christ and in us, not our being justified before God.

If I turn now to the Romans, it is otherwise. I get Christ alive on the earth, come of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared Son of God with power by resurrection. Still flesh could not live unto God, nor they that are in it please Him. Hence we find Christ as come in grace for them, not dead but dying, and then alive to God. I get the condition and quality of man, not simply the work of God as to one dead. So as to men ; I get the means of standing in righteousness before God, and not an absolute work. Nor is this all. In the Romans the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God is not contemplated, nor the union of the church with Him. Hence we are not said to be quickened together with Him, nor made to sit in heavenly places in Him. His exaltation is just mentioned in chapter 8, with "who even is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"—which last thought does not, of course, contemplate union. In chapter 12 the practical effect of union among ourselves is spoken of ; but, in general, these topics form no part of the

instruction of the epistle. Men are living, guilty beings, the whole world guilty before God; and to learn that, in the remediless state of their nature, death is the only remedy; in itself fatal, doubtless, but perfectly saving when in Christ. It is atonement for all sin, and deliverance from the position in which we were: for death is evidently the end of that, and our life thus wholly new, Christ being risen from the dead, and we are to walk as alive to God through Him. We are justified by His blood; and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

But the Romans, as teaching the justification of a sinner, necessarily first views him as a sinner to be justified. Hence it goes through the whole question of law; and we have the experiences of the man not justified, though convinced of sin, and then justified from the sin—alive in conscience without law, dying under law, and alive in Christ, where there is no condemnation. The practical process is gone through. The effect is this, that he is brought up to the point where the Epistle to the Ephesians begins with him. He finds that there is no escape from the condition he is in, as a child of Adam, or a Jew, but by death. Yet, were it his own, it would of course, lead him to judgment, not to justification, but where all guilt is proved. It is Christ who dies, and is set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood; so that God is just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. That meets the case of guilt, but is not life; for so Christ would be dead, and we brought in Him into death. This could not in any way be. For not only would there be no life, but it would even prove, as the apostle shews in 1 Corinthians 15, that there was no remedy. Our faith would be vain; we should be yet in our sins. But we believe that God has raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.

The consequence of this different view of things is seen in the practical result in man under the operation of God's Spirit.

In the Romans we have experiences flowing from the conflict of the newly introduced principle of life with flesh, or the effect of deliverance from it, by the knowledge of the power of deliverance in Christ. The former we find in chapter 7, where the conflict of the new nature with the lusts and will of the old under law are depicted; and the second in chapter 8, where the spiritual blessings of one who is made

free from the law of sin and death, by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, are drawn out before us in a way to produce the profoundest interest in the soul that enters into it.

In the Ephesians the man is dead in sins, and transported into heavenly places by the operation of God; being created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God has afore prepared, that we might walk in them. The works belong to the new place and condition in which alone we are known in the Ephesians. God has afore prepared works for His new created ones. Hence, we have no experience of passing through conflict, and deliverance, and its results; but there is a demand to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, and a desire that the saints, being rooted and grounded in love, may realise in their hearts, by Christ's dwelling in them by faith, the full effect, even to filling to all the fulness of God, the greatness of the infinite scene of glory into which they are brought, and know that love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

In result the general principle of the difference is this. In the Romans, the man is found alive in sin, is convicted of it, and has (Christ having died for him to put it away) to come, in the conviction of the hopeless badness of his nature, to death, and then rising again, alive through Jesus Christ, be thus justified before God, and by God, on the one hand, and alive in a new life on the other; then nothing shall separate him from the love of Christ. In the Ephesians the man is found dead in sins; but then he is raised up, and set in heavenly places in Christ (according to the power in which Christ, when dead, was raised of God, and set in the heavenly places, far above principalities and powers, and every name that is named), and brought as a new creation, children withal, and heirs into immediate nearness to God. The additional truth is brought out, that we are united to Christ in this place, as members of His body, and His heavenly bride.

I cannot here—time does not allow it—do more than draw out the great general principles of the different aspects of truth presented by the two epistles. He who searches as a devout learner into the truth of God, will, I am sure, find (in what I here notice in these epistles) elements of deep and profitable instruction, as to his own relationship with God, the Christianity of his soul and of the word, and of his soul according to the word. Perhaps some one, for his own and our edification, may furnish us with further results which flow from it.

COMPARISON OF EPISTLES

THE comparison of certain epistles illustrates with much interest and instruction the path of the Christian. I send you the thoughts which have suggested the remark. I refer particularly to the Epistle of Peter, Colossians, and Ephesians.

In Peter we have Christ risen, having accomplished redemption; then His own actings, in that resurrection, of that power of life which is the spring of all our hope, and sets it in lively exercise towards its end, which is in heaven, and hence makes a man, and even a Jew (who once had other thoughts), a stranger and a pilgrim here. We will examine this in the statements of the epistles.

But to make my meaning more clear, I will first refer to the Ephesians. There the saints are seen sitting in heaven—there already—not on the way there; their conflicts and position in general flow from this. Hence they are seen risen with Christ, seated in heavenly places in Him, and this, through union with their Head, by the Holy Ghost sent down; on which last great fact their earthly position also depends.

The Epistle to the Colossians is based indeed on the same principle; but there they were in danger of not holding the Head. Hence they are addressed on somewhat lower ground, and urged up to the point which should have been the spring from which their thoughts and feelings flowed.

To turn now to the epistles themselves, remark, in Peter, the ground on which the Spirit of God places the saints, the sojourners of the dispersion, that is, the believing Jews scattered through the provinces. They are "begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is not that they are not risen with Him. Of course they were; yet they are not viewed under this aspect, but as redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; travelling through the wilderness towards Canaan—not seated in the land eating of the old corn of it (whatever conflicts were before them there), but through the efficacy of redemption made strangers and pilgrims in the desert. It is the Christian's place here below—not the privilege and joy of faith, but the life of faith; and hence, all through which he passes here become not distractions for his heart, whether painful or pleasant, but trials of his faith. This is exceedingly gracious and loving of our God

(and what is not?), and the consequences in many respects exceedingly precious.

In the Ephesians we have, however, the Christian in another point of view. Heaven is not presented as a hope; the Christian is there. It is not that the resurrection of Christ has begotten him to such a hope; the same power which raised Christ, and set Him at the right hand of God, far above all principality and power, has wrought in him; and he is raised up together with Him, quickened together, and sitting in heavenly places in Him. Thus he is viewed as in heaven in Christ the Head, not as hoping to arrive there. Peter views him as toiling along the road, being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ—as Israel in the desert, with Canaan before them; the Ephesians, as sitting there in his Head, Christ. Hence neither is the coming of Christ presented as a hope in the Ephesians. What is set before us in the way of hope, in the form of intelligence communicated of God, is the gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth—in Him in whom we have received an inheritance. The power which has wrought in Christ has wrought in the believer, God having given Christ to be "the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." God, of His great love wherewith He has loved us, has, when we were all together children of wrath, quickened us together with Him, and made us sit, raised up together, in heavenly places in Him.

In Colossians, at first sight, we seem to have lost this position. But the epistle does but serve to bring out more distinctly the great and precious truth. The apostle is obliged to bring out heaven prominently before them. They needed this; and we have, as in Peter, "the hope which is laid* up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before." Why this difference where, nevertheless, Christ is put forward as the Head of the body? They were beginning alas! to be beguiled, and to be subject to ordinances, not holding the Head. But the apostle urges them, as it were, back to the point from which they were slipping away. He presses on them their resurrection with Christ; once dead in trespasses and sins, but buried in baptism with Him, and raised through faith in the operation of God who hath raised Him. If dead with Christ, how could they, as alive, be subject to what related to

* The word is different from the one Peter uses.

flesh and perished with it? And then he draws the conclusion, which associates the two practically: "If then ye be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This was their real position. They were indeed in danger of slipping away from it; but he urges them upward to their privilege and place in Christ.

As regards the coming of the Lord, it is also introduced in a way which remarkably confirms this character of instruction. They were not taught to wait for Him as if they were on earth, and He to appear. Nor is it omitted in order to contemplate their association with Him in heaven. His appearance is spoken of; but then their association with Him, in a life which is with Him now hidden in God, is pressed upon them, by this remarkable truth, that when He appears, so identified were they with Him that they would appear with Him. Their hearts and affections, then, are urged upwards, but it was to lay hold on the consciousness that they were one with Him that was there. Their life was hid with Him there, but they were not holding the Head as they ought. I do not go farther here; perhaps I may, at another time, notice the different way the Lord's coming is spoken of connected with this.

WHAT GOD IS TO US IN CHRIST

EPHESIANS 1.

THERE are two ways in which we may look at our relationship to God, and rightly: first, our coming to Him; and secondly, our souls looking at the dealings of God towards us.

Of Abel, it is said, by the Holy Spirit, God had respect unto his gifts—he came with his needed offering. We are looked at in the Epistle to the Hebrews as drawing near to God. Who could draw near unless he could bring Christ as an offering? We must have that sacrifice in order to bring us near, consequently in that case our relationship to God is measured by our need. We come near because we find we cannot do without it, and we accept that offering as needed to accomplish it.

In another way, the measure of God's blessing we never know until we look on our relationship as measured by God's thoughts of us—by all that which He loves to display when He satisfies His own heart of grace with His ways of shewing it out. We never enjoy our true blessing unless we see how He thus feels and acts. My mind must rise above what I am, to what God is; then it is my mind is formed by the revelation of what God is. To this we are called.

We must come in by our need, as the prodigal did. Man cannot by searching find out God. There cannot be any knowledge of God in grace by man's competency to know Him. There would be no need of grace if he could know God without it. If I can claim this grace, I do not need grace at all. The way a sinner must come in must be by his need; in that way he learns grace, learns love. But when I have got to God, it is another thing. Then He would form our minds and hearts by what He is Himself. I come as a sinner, because I need it—just as a hungry man needs food; but when brought, I have fellowship with the God who has brought me to Himself. The measure is given in this epistle—"growing up into Christ, in all things." It is a wonderful thing that God has called us into fellowship with Himself—to have the same thoughts, the same feelings as God, and to have them together. All flows down from Him and we are brought into it by grace, and we enjoy it just so far as we are emptied of self.

First, He makes us partakers of the divine nature—the same nature as Himself. This gives the capacity—I do not say

power. The new nature is capacity; the Holy Ghost is power. The new nature is entirely dependent and obedient. The Holy Ghost being there gives me power. In the first Epistle of John this capacity is brought out in a remarkable manner (chap. 4). Every one that loveth is born of God—has this nature; and he that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Then being partakers of His nature, we, by virtue of the blood being sprinkled on us, have received the Holy Ghost which gives power. In order to communion there must be perfect peace as regards the conscience. There is no communion in conscience. I am alone as to my conscience, and so are you. In order to communion, I must have nothing to settle with conscience: a perfectly purged conscience is the basis of communion. We must know that God has settled the whole question of sin. The moment a child of God fails, communion ceases. The Spirit then becomes a reprover to bring him back; but there is no communion. Communion is the full enjoyment of God and of divine things; when there is nothing to think of as regards oneself. God can now let flow into his heart who has a conscience purged, all that He delights in. He loves to communicate what He Himself has joy in. All that Christ is is for us to enjoy. You are called into this place of Christ Himself—He, the Head of the body; and that the delight God has in Christ should flow down into your heart. How rich then the saint must be! but he is entirely dependent on the Spirit of God for power. There is no power to enjoy anything without Him. There must be an emptying from self to enjoy what He gives. The Spirit of God has no place to act where self and imagination are in exercise. It is not the glory at the end that is so much the object of the believer's thoughts, as the source of it—God Himself. There is more happiness in the fact of being in communion with Him than in the things He communicates: and I say again, because of its importance, a soul cannot have the enjoyment of the things of God without having peace, which is connected with the conscience.

The beginning of this chapter shews how we are presented to God. It is a test, whether the judgment-seat brings any terror to your minds. Does it give you any uneasiness? How does the saint get there? Christ comes to fetch him. He said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." Do you ever think of your coming before the judgment-seat

being the effect of His having come to fetch you? Not sending for you, but coming Himself for you, because of His desire to have you with Him where He is, to be fashioned into the same image. You are to bear the image of the heavenly, as you have borne the image of the earthy. When you are there before the judgment-seat, you will be with Him, and like Him: every trace of God's unwearied hand, all His patience, here brought out. We shall be like the One who is the Judge. You will never (I speak, of course, to saints now) be before the judgment-seat of Christ without His coming to fetch you into the same glory in which you are to be. It is the knowledge of grace, or redemption, that leaves me at perfect liberty; and all my life should be a witness to the enjoyment of this blessedness into which we are being brought. The whole of this is through looking at Christ. He is the Firstborn among many brethren in the Father's house. We shall be with Christ and like Christ before God the Father. There will be the blessedness of being with Christ, in the presence of the Father, loved as He is loved. This is what we have in this chapter—set in the presence of God.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are blessed in Christ, and God is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is "my God and your God," Christ said. There is no measure of any relationship out of Christ—nothing but condemnation out of Christ. If I have known what it is to be condemned, if I have known what sin is, and how God hates sin, I know there can be no hope for me out of Christ. But God has put away sin. God does not look at my sin, but on Christ. Just as I know my condition in Adam as ruined and condemned, so I know my place in Christ—accepted. How it throws us out of self-importance, self-dependence, self-glorying! We enter into the presence of God in Him who has perfectly glorified God. He is the God as well as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is that wrought in Christ which was hidden from ages and from generations, and He has gone back in virtue of what He has done to vindicate the character of God. We enter into the blessing in Him who has done all. We shall know God in virtue of what the Father bestows upon us. The Father brings many sons unto glory, and brings them back perfect through the work of Christ—"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ": none can be wanting; not an affection of God's

delight is wanting. He brings us into His presence without one reserve of the affection that Christ has. We are brought back in Christ. Therefore all that Christ has we have.

How he goes on to unfold it! "That we should be holy and without blame before him in love." He is not content with a mere general account, but brings it out in detail that we may know it. Suppose I saw a person with an excellent character, and I felt I could never be like that person, I should not be happy. The fact of the excellency of the person, without the possibility of being like him, would make me miserable; and to have him always before me would be all the worse. But in heaven I shall be with Christ, and see Him, without the possibility of being unlike Him. What divine inventiveness of love to make us happy, infinitely happy! What God does, and is, is infinite; and it is so much the better that He will be always above us.

We shall have perfect freedom of intercourse with Him. Moses and Elias were speaking with Him of His death (it may not be then so much of His death), but there will be communion with Him of all that He has.

"Without blame." Released from all that which would hinder my loving Him; therefore I am made "holy and without blame." There is the proper joy of the heart—"before him in love," but no thought of equality; "wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." Then there is another fact—"Chosen in him before the foundation of the world." Thus we have His heart set upon us in eternity. The soul knows there is a personal love from God towards himself, and the heart delights in that. So with Christ. In Revelation 2 there is the white stone He will give—proof of personal delight. There is the individual rejoicing in the love of Christ.

How the Spirit seeks to draw out our affections by all this! He tells it all, and would have us know and enjoy it. He would have us know that we are going to heaven, and why. He would form our hearts by what He is doing, while bringing us in, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children" —still in Christ and with Christ—"by Jesus Christ unto himself." It is through Him, and in Him, and with Him I find it. It is having my heart fixed on God and the Father, that my affections may be drawn out to Him, and all is because "accepted in the beloved." God has not blessed angels like

this. We are not servants only (we should be servants, to be sure), but we are brought into the confidence of children. Ought not a child to have confidence? We have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba Father." Our heart should answer to God's outgoings of heart in grace, and reflect this grace, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." He has done it all.

Remark here, that there is not as yet a word about the inheritance. I dwell on that, as shewing how the affections of the saint are formed. If I speak of the inheritance, it is something below me. All prophecy concerns the inheritance. But I am looking at what is above me, and my own blessedness is in what is above me. Subjects connected with the church, blessed as they are, as prophecy, etc., are below. He will exercise us about these things, but let me first get my relationship with my Father known. Do not talk of me, what I have, but of what Christ is, and what He has. My soul must enjoy the love that has given it all. The love that has saved is more than the things given. It is of importance to the saints to feel this in the presence of God. It is not mental power, but the heart right—a single eye—that is the great thing. Unless a soul gets its intelligence and direction from God, it never understands the ways and affections of God. His own affections must be known and valued. If I have not known my place in the affections of my Father, I am not in a position to have the communion of His thoughts and purposes. When we were dead in sins, His heart was exercised for us. The sinner is here looked at as dead, not "living" in sins (as in Colossians) and chastening, etc., for that, but in Ephesians "dead," not a movement of life, when God comes and creates and blesses according to His own will. When our souls have known the value of Christ's sacrifice bringing us to God, we are seen not in ourselves at all, but only in Christ. Then there is perfect rest.

But afterwards he can tell us of the inheritance; and then the prayer is that we may know the hope of His calling (which calling is not the inheritance). He has called us to be "before him in love" (*v.* 3–6); then verse 11 begins about the inheritance. Now I will shew you what Christ's inheritance is, and you are to have it too. I must know I am a child and have the thoughts and affections of the child before I can have to

do with the inheritance. The end of the matter is that we are brought in to share the inheritance.

How far are your hearts confiding in God's rest only for your wants, etc.? Rather how far is your confidence and delight in Him for Himself? The heart of the child will delight in the affections of the father. Do your thoughts about God flow from what God has revealed to you of Himself? or are you reasoning about God—will He, or will He not, do it? When it is a settled thing with me that I am a sinner, what have I to reason about? We want to be brought to this simple conviction: I am a sinner; and if I am a sinner, what am I to do? Can I look for anything from God on the ground of righteousness? No. When brought to God I am brought to grace. What He is is the spring and source of the whole matter. We are in Christ. It could not be otherwise. We stand there now, by virtue of the atonement, in that position which makes the sin the very occasion for God to bless. Christ died for my sins, and God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

God is going to take us to heaven, to be happy with Christ there; but He makes us happy out of heaven too. It is a difficult thing, but He does; and He would have the saints living up there where God is, and where we are going, and free from this present evil world.

THE PRAYERS IN
EPHESIANS 1 : 15–23 AND 3 : 14–21

ONE prayer is attached to the name of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He is looked at as Man ; the other to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He is looked at as Son. The beginning of chapter 1 gave us God's calling, that we should be " holy and without blame before him in love," that we might receive " the adoption of sons." After stating His purpose concerning Christ Himself, that all things are to be gathered together in one in Him, the apostle goes on to the inheritance of which the Holy Ghost is the earnest, and then to the prayer for them on this ground. At the very close of the chapter he adds our relationship to Christ Himself, " the church which is his body." It is always well for us to remember that Christ has purified to Himself a peculiar people, a people of possession, and we cannot rise up to the counsels of God and mind of Christ unless we be brought into these intentions of God. The most immediate and closest object of His thoughts is His saints. I necessarily take in all saints if I am in His thoughts ; I cannot have the mind of Christ without taking in all of them ; it is the very spirit of Christ Himself.

There are two parts in this prayer of the apostle. The first is, that they might know the place itself ; the second, that they should know the power that brought them there. The very fulness of the blessing we have got is that we are blessed with Him. As we were associated with the first Adam in ruin, so we are associated with the second Man in glory. There is nothing He has that He does not bring us into. This is the character of perfect love. Christ gives " not as the world giveth." The world may give generously sometimes, but it has done with what it gives ; Christ gives by introducing His own into what He is enjoying Himself. Take glory : " the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." Take joy : " that my joy might remain in you." Take peace : " peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Take love : " that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Having become man and accomplished perfect redemption, He would not take the inheritance without His joint-heirs. He is the source and head of all the glory that is given. " What is the

hope of His calling?" Not of your calling—this would not do at all. Here it has the fullest and highest character. He takes the heart up to these thoughts and counsels of God. We are called to be before God holy and without blame; we are called to be in Christ's place before God, before the Father, perfectly answering to His love. He does not pray that they may have it, but that they may know it.

As to His inheritance in the saints, if our minds took in the Jewish place compared with our own, this would be extremely simple. Whose land was Israel's? It was God's inheritance; and those in whom He inherited it were Israel. We are not an inheritance, but we are heirs of God. We have nothing below what God would have in His mind here.

Observe the prayer is, "that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened." We must not think that we ought not to know these things. The New Testament carefully tells us that we have them laid open to us expressly. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"—such was the state of the Jews; but it is not our state. These things are not only given to us, but we are given to understand them; we are not in the condition of the Old Testament at all. In 1 Corinthians 2 we have the three steps; revelation by the Holy Ghost; communication of the word given by the Holy Ghost; and the reception of the word by the Holy Ghost.

Take the account of the heavenly city in the Apocalypse—it means something. All those images are characteristic in Scripture; I quite admit they are only figures, but they convey thoughts. The more we live in the mind of God, the more intelligent we are. The same things I see through a glass darkly, I shall see more clearly, but not differently. Thus the "white stone" is a symbol full of power. We have common joys, but there is the immediate approbation of Christ to the individual. "Gold" is always the sign of divine righteousness in itself. In the laver the priests were to wash and be clean; but with the sea of glass like crystal I walk upon purity. So "fire" is judgment, as "a sea of glass mingled with fire"; it is perfect purity as the result of judgment. "The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Instead of walking through the dirt of

this world, I am to walk in holiness and righteousness according to God. In the Apocalypse we do not go beyond the idea of God in government.

Now we come to the power that brings us into these things. " According to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." What an immense truth there is in connection with this! The Messiah was not merely the promised Son of David, but the One in whom all God's counsels would be accomplished. He went down below all things, and then goes far above all heavens. This dead Man is raised above all principality and power. He had gone down into the place of death, and men are consequently looked at as dead in sins, not as living in them.

It is well to note here that to look at the sinner as alive in sins, or as dead in them, is just the same state, but a different aspect of it. In Romans man is seen alive in sins, and Christ meeting that state. There is nothing of justification in Ephesians, not a single stir of life there; we were dead in the sins, and Christ died for the sins. God comes in and takes us all up together, looked at as in the mind and counsels of God. God quickens us together with Him. Christ comes down to this place of death, having cleansed our sins on the road, and God raises Him. Man is looked at consequently as united to Christ. This you do not find in the other epistles. The same power has wrought in every individual who believes in Christ that wrought in Him. Christ had gone into death for us, entering into the whole thing in grace and finding us where we were, and, He having wrought the work that entitles Him to take us out of it, we are raised with Him, seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is your place; He does not ask you what you think about it! There is no person who has the Spirit of Christ without this as his place. We are waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body, but one must be either in Christ or out of Christ. There are never two places for the Christian.

All things are to be put under Christ's feet as Man, for God " gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body "—a short sentence, but the whole mystery is in it. It is a quotation of Psalm 8, " all things are put under his feet." In Psalm 2 He is seen as Son of David, King of Zion,

Son of God. Nathanael refers to this psalm; and Jesus says to him, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man." He is rejected, and then comes out Psalm 8. Now He is crowned with glory and honour, but we do not see all things put under His feet yet. He is now sitting on the Father's throne. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." "Sit thou on my right hand," says Jehovah, "till I make thine enemies thy footstool." The day of grace is before that "till." There is our comfort and blessing, that He has finished the work for His friends. "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them which are sanctified." We stand therefore between the work which He perfected at His first coming, and His second coming. We are not, like the Jews, waiting to see that His offering is accepted, because the Holy Ghost is come out meanwhile and seals those who believe in Christ. I know the acceptance; I know that He is our forerunner. Then He deals with His enemies. When thus set over all things, the Son Himself will be subject to Him who put all things under Him—a most blessed truth for us. He will reign while He brings all into absolute order for God; when this has been done, He will take His place as Man and never give it up. He is the first-born among many brethren. Over everything He created, He is set as Man: but a head without a body would not be complete. The supplement is wanting; the church is His body.

No one ever mentions the church but Paul. Others may speak of a local church; and Christ said, "On this rock I will build my church"; but I am not speaking of this either. If the church had been revealed before the cross, you must make every Jew who was in it break the law. The essence of the church is that all are one, Jew and Gentile.

The prayer in chapter 3 is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There the apostle does not ask that they may know all these thoughts and counsels of God, but that Christ may dwell in their hearts. He is not now looking at them objectively, but at Christ in them. He desires that they should have Christ actually, consciously, by faith dwelling in their hearts, settled in the perfectness of divine love, that they may be able to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height—he does not say of what—while putting

Christ in the centre of all that glory. If I look at the breadth and length and depth and height, it is dazzling. If I found my closest friend the centre of the Queen's court, I should be at home there at once. Is it that I have lost anything by this, that it is the humble lowly One who is dwelling in my heart? Not a bit.

Thus, if in chapter 1 we have exterior power bringing up Christ, or ourselves by grace, into a position of glory at God's right hand, in chapter 3 we find divine power in us as in the position, and we sought to be strengthened and filled accordingly, in order to realise what it and God Himself is in the fulness of it. It is not God dealing with man, but Christ's relation as Son and dwelling in us by faith—He, the centre and divinely entitled light of the fulness and display, dwelling in us to give competency to enter into all the scene. Rooted and grounded in love we are at the centre thus in its moral or rather divine springs, and so embrace all that partake of the divine nature, because it is the action of that nature. Thus we look out into the wide extended scene of glory, whose limit none can tell; yet still this is a display, not a source, a scene, not Himself. In love we are at the source of all. We know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. What I know it in has made it wholly and peculiarly mine, yes, mine as being nothing in it. Christ is divine, infinite in nature. It is so proved in the way it adapts itself to all my wants and weakness, known in adapting itself to them, yet known in itself. As Christ's love it is for man, is manifested in man, and adapts itself to man; yet therein as divine it passes knowledge and brings man, as spiritual (he can feel, think, and apprehend as man), into the enjoyment of the scene, in which God is displayed, and to God Himself according to His own fulness, and this filled with love as in the centre of it consciously. It is we, not brought into a scene by power, but filled up to the measure of the fulness of God, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. Thus love is the spring of power in us, so that we estimate the scene of that fulness according to the title, character, and nature of God in it, He Himself being the ultimate blessedness of which we are conscious. What makes us familiar there is, that that which is in us, and which is the central light of all, is One we know, who dwells in us by faith, the nearest and most confided in of all, yet the fulness of Deity is in Him. Compare Rev. 21 : 23.

God " is able to do exceeding abundantly according to the power that worketh in us." This is what we are to look for now: has your heart got hold of this? There is a power that works in us, and He can do exceeding abundantly above all we ask and think according to it. How little faith there is in the power of God!

I believe everything is in ruin or confusion; but there is no ruin or confusion in the power of Christ. I never can think of a power of evil that is not below His power.

"NOT OF THE WORLD"

EPHESIANS 1

WE get here the whole scope of God's thoughts and purposes. The Epistle to the Ephesians takes in two things: the presence and power of the Holy Ghost on earth, and the condition that we are in as the result of it; and what this is founded on, the exaltation of Christ at God's right hand. Ephesians does not speak of the coming of the Lord, because the way our glory is brought about is not its subject, but the present blessing of the saints. There is a distinct part at the end where our conflict with Satan comes in, but the general scope is what I have said: the basis, the exaltation of Christ; then purpose, what is in God's mind; and then the knowledge of it, by the Holy Ghost come down. "He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand"; this was needed for us to know our place and the most important consequences flowing from it down here. The presence of the Holy Ghost who has come down from heaven, the seal of our being heirs, and the earnest of the inheritance, is our present condition, based upon Christ raised to the right hand of God. A Man is sitting at the right hand of God: a wonderful truth for us. His "delights are with the sons of men." Being a Man, and having died and therein perfectly glorified God, God has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand; and thereupon the Holy Ghost is come down here, so that we are associated with Him and the things that are on high, in heart and mind, though not yet there as to our bodies. This is where the heart has to be; our conversation is in heaven, for the Lord is there, not here; He is coming to make our bodies like unto His glorious body, but at present we have the Holy Ghost associating us with the place where He is.

God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." That is God's mind. We are not yet there in fact, but it is the thought of God about us, and we ought to have it always before us. Blessings of the Jews in earthly places under Christ will be fulfilled in time, but for us it is "spiritual blessings," and "in heavenly places," and "in Christ" Himself; and our present connection with it all comes through the Holy Ghost.

We next get, in verses 4 and 5, two aspects of these spiritual blessings: they are brought before us in connection with the

God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, Christ is looked at as Son and looked at as Man. The Father owned Him in manhood as the Son in Matthew 3, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God is called the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as Man ; He is called His Father as Son.

This is the great basis of the wonderful place in which we are. It is man that God has in His mind put in this place of glory in His own Son. And this is not without its consequences, and those of the very highest nature.

God's choosing us before the foundation of the world is not what affirms in the time of choosing the sovereignty of grace, for, supposing for a moment that God were to choose us now, it would be just as sovereign an act as doing it then. The practical truth brought out in His choosing us before the foundation of the world is, that it proves that we have nothing whatever to do with the world ; before its very foundation we were chosen ; we have nothing to do with it but to get through it. God would bring us into this blessedness with Himself which has nothing to do with the world. We have just to go through it " unspotted " ; that is all we have to do with it. Our living place was settled with God before ever it existed. God had this thought to have a people in Christ, " holy and without blame before him in love." This is what God Himself is. He thus brings us to be according to His own nature—" holy and without blame " before Himself. We have an infinite object before whom we are, and having the divine nature we can enjoy that object. We are not taken out of the world yet, nor are meant to be ; but we are to pass through it as Christ did. If one look at it in another point of view, it is just what Christ was Himself, and that before God. This is the thought of God.

Then (*v.* 5) I get the Father. He might have had servants like the angels, but this was not His thought : " He predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." He insists on that, it is the blessed part of it—that it is before God, and to Himself as Father. If it be a relationship, it is to Himself.

Thus we have the nature, " holy and without blame." It does not say there " according to the good pleasure of his will," for God could not have beings in His presence in a sinful state. But when it is relationship, it is "according

to the good pleasure of his will " : He chooses to have us as sons. I get love, the nature of God—" in love "—and love of predilection too. The place we get into is one that is according to the good pleasure of His will, and He brings us according to His own nature before Himself ; there is not a cloud because He has " made us accepted in the beloved "—Christ assuredly ; but He gives that name to Him to mark the full character of the blessedness, and thus brings us into His own presence.

This is the purpose ; it does not say here how much of it is accomplished : it will not be fully until we are in the glory. Only in the end of the chapter we get what is accomplished in fact, as the groundwork of all our present enjoyment of it in spirit. God takes Christ out of death and sets Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. This is an accomplished thing ; it is " wrought in Christ " : Christ as Man is in the glory of God.

And then we get the third thing : the Holy Ghost has come down meanwhile. Before the purpose is accomplished, but when the work in Christ is accomplished, the Holy Ghost comes down, the seal with which God has sealed those here who have part in His purpose, and the earnest of their inheritance. We are then competent to see God's plans about Christ Himself, His purpose " to gather together in one all things in him, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Then it is glory.

The first verses were our calling ; now it is our inheritance. And this inheritance is " after the counsel of his own will." It is sovereign grace to poor sinners that brings us into this place. It will not be accomplished until He come ; it is in Him we have obtained it, being " predestinated according to his purpose." That which is believed in order to our being sealed is " the gospel of our salvation." John the Baptist was the forerunner of Him who was to accomplish it ; but now we have the glad tidings of it consequent on the actual exaltation of Christ, and the seal of the Holy Ghost as the earnest of what is to come.

This is where we are whilst still in the world which is no part of the purpose of God, but in which, passing through discipline, we learn the difference between flesh and spirit ; it is His ways, but not part of His purpose. The Holy Ghost comes down from heaven, gives us to know Christ, reveals to us our inheritance, bears witness to us that we are " heirs of

God and joint-heirs with Christ." He makes us know where we are ; that we belong to heaven and not to this earth at all. As we read in Proverbs : " In the beginning of his way, before his works of old, from the beginning or ever the earth was, then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and my delights were with the sons of men," so Christ became Man, and is gone into glory as our forerunner.

I desire that our hearts may feel that in God's thoughts and purposes He has given us a place that is not of the world at all, and that all our business in this world is to keep ourselves unspotted from it. I do not belong to this world ; before the foundation of it I was chosen. It is not thus simply the sovereignty that does what it pleases, but that we, as Christians, do not belong to earth at all. Epistle of Christ is what we are ; we may not live up to it, but it is what we are called to : to manifest the second Man in the midst of the world that has rejected Him.

ELECT OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED

EPHESIANS 1 : 4–14

GOD has purposed in Himself to have before Himself that which shall reflect His own blessedness—He taking pleasure in us, and we taking pleasure in Him; as it is said here, "that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love." He will have His people of the same nature as Himself, gathered around Himself, happy here, and for Himself. His thought is not merely that we should have an inheritance; as we read of "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." He "hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

And this is just the character of this Epistle; the apostle, in speaking of redemption, does so, not so much as of something needed by us, in order to appear before God, as of these purposes of God concerning us. We may look at God as a Judge; but, more than this, God is working for the display of the riches of the glory of His grace.

This lifts up the soul. God has thoughts and intentions about us. As in the case of a young man, whom, a person has (in ordinary language) "taken up," and is about to provide for, it is not a question of what the one was, but of the thoughts and intentions of the other—of what, in a word, he is, and will do, for the young man; so, though in a much more blessed sense, has God "taken up" poor sinners, that He might act towards them worthily of Himself, to the praise of the glory of His grace. The other thing remains true: God is a Judge, and "we have redemption, forgiveness of sins, through his blood" (Christ's); and we must understand this before we can enjoy our privileges in Christ.

God has "taken us up." Our very existence in the new creation, is the fruit of His purpose and thoughts about us. This has a double bearing. It shews how we are to measure what God is doing for us, as a question of God's purpose; and, besides being this measure, it makes us understand the source of it all. And this has a most happy effect: instead of looking at ourselves, and judging from ourselves, we look at

God. Nothing but life-giving power could ever have wrought this. Our thoughts about God are, that He is the source of all our blessing. As the young man, before alluded to, would have pleasure in thinking about the friend who had " taken him up," so this thought about God is a happy thought, and, moreover, one of great sanctifying power.

God has " predestinated us unto the adoption of children." It is not here, simply, a question of purpose (of God's counsel, and, therefore, sure) : that to which He has predestinated us, is the present adoption of children. A poor sinner, a sinner of the Gentiles, having no title whatever to blessing, I trace all my title to God's purpose, which He has purposed in Himself. This is true also of the Jews, though, in a certain sense, they stood on different ground ; Christ was " a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers " ; but of the Gentiles it is said, " and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." It is of grace, of God's free thought about us. He has taken pleasure in us, as Joshua said to Israel : " If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it unto us, a land which floweth with milk and honey." We cannot boast in anything ; for we have not anything whatever wherein to boast, except in this, that God has taken delight in us to give us the adoption. The effect is most blessed ; we know Himself—" after ye have known God, or rather are known of God." What He has predestinated us unto, is not a distant thing, nor yet merely salvation (in the sense of escape from the wrath of God) ; it is the nearest place He could have put us into, not as with the Jews, " I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn " : we are adopted with the " adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Here we get not only the source but the manner—the source, God's love ; the manner, in Christ.

" The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us "—the Word that was in the beginning with God, and was God. But the light shone in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. It is not said that there was want of power, but that men's deeds were evil, and that, therefore, they would not come unto the light. A Christian who is walking carelessly does not like a godly Christian to come into contact with him, he feels condemned ; whenever the heart is not with

God, light makes it uneasy. But besides being light, "In him was life," and that is what we needed; while He shews us our evil, He is the good we need. Predestinated unto the adoption of children, it is in Him. Called according to God's purpose, we are to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Of His fulness, have all we received, and grace for grace. We are brought into the presence of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when Jesus goes away, He says, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, unto my God and your God." He has Himself met all our responsibility, otherwise the light would have been terrible. There are two things, substitution, and communication of life. In substitution, He stood alone. But guilt being taken away, we quickened together with Him, He presents us in the Father's presence, as He is.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." But not merely has the Son of God visited us when we were in our sins, nor merely, either, been delivered for our offences. "Herein is our love [love with us] made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." We have no life except in Christ; we have no acceptance apart from Christ. He has made us accepted in the Beloved—the measure is just that. It is God's delight to bring us, in Christ, and by Christ, into His own presence. We can go no farther; "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," writes John. We may enjoy it more and more, we may delight in it in deepened measure, but we cannot have anything beyond. When God speaks of glorifying Himself, or of our glorifying Him, it means through the display of what He is; it is God's glory to display Himself; therefore, in this, which is to the glory of His grace, we have the display of Himself.

And do not let us suppose that this goes beyond what we may think about (a very natural thought): the apostle says further on, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your

hearts by faith: being rooted and grounded in love, that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God," chap. 3 : 14–19. It is not a matter of human wisdom, learning, or attainment; in proportion as we become simple as little children, we shall understand these things, through the Holy Ghost. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." It has nothing to do with human learning, except to set it aside; lowliness of mind is what is needed.

"The good pleasure of his will" is not, simply, sovereignty—it is the good pleasure of His will. God is acting in His love, displaying the will of His grace, "taking up" poor, wretched, vile sinners, and unfolding on these objects of His mercy, all the riches of His own goodness. The "good pleasure of his will," that which God takes delight in, is the ministering of the fulness of His blessing to us. Here the soul gets established. It is quite evident, that the measure of His goodness cannot be, in any sense, the measure of what we are, as deserving at His hands; while it is His good pleasure, it is the good pleasure of His grace. And further, whilst I have need, for the establishment of my soul, to learn what He is, to be delighting in the goodness of God, it is this too which sanctifies. If I could be always thinking of what He is, I should be perfectly happy, and there would be the reflection in me of that with which my soul was occupied.

We begin, often, at the wrong end. On what are we resting our acceptance? It is not anything in ourselves that will do. Or, it is a question of sanctification? "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (that is, I look at the Lord, and, as a consequence of my looking at the Lord, I reveal to men what He is). Moses, on coming down from the mount, was not inquiring whether his face shone, in order to know if he had been with God; others saw this.

It is such a comfort, to get to God and feel, that it is in Him, and from Him.

Where, naturally, would our souls rest? It is quite a natural feeling, if we have been convinced of sin, that we should want to get at peace to know there is nothing against

us, but the apostle here, is looking at those whom God has " taken up," and He has " made us accepted in the Beloved." That is God's thought about us ; He has shewn us this grace in a particular way, and in a particular person—Christ. It is not merely a negative thing ; He takes as positive delight in us, as He does in Jesus. He is no double-measure God.

" Put on as the elect of God," Paul writes to the Colossians, " holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness," etc., saints, and beloved ones of God, objects of God's love, God's delight (the measure of which is Christ), thus He addresses them. If I am beloved of a person, this draws out love. So the consciousness of God's love, God's delight produces links in affection, that exist not without it. My thought of being accepted is not merely, that my sins are put away, so that I could stand before Him—I am the object of His delight ; holy affections are drawn out, and I pass through the world as a beloved one of God. We cannot suppose, in Christ's going through this world (and this shews us our deficiency as Christians), one single thing of it, that acts on our hearts, acting on His ; He was the beloved One of God—" This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and He was going through the world as such. Thus, too, should the Christian walk through the world with the consciousness of being beloved of God ; with this, we do not want the world—without it, we are obliged to turn to something that makes self the centre.

Young or old, that is what we are—beloved of God. Perhaps, you will say, " Ah, but I am very proud, very worldly, I do not give up the things of the world." Very likely not, and that is a reason for your being reminded of this, that you may.

" In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." This is the leading thought in the apostle's mind. And remark, he speaks of that which is positively possessed, not of something we are hoping for, or expecting ; He " hath made us accepted in the Beloved," we " have redemption through his blood," etc. This grace of God, this " good pleasure of his will" has planted and set us in it all. We may be practically destitute of the joy of these things, but that is where we are. And He has given to those whom He has set in this place, the knowledge of His purpose as to the glory of Christ, as it goes on to say, " wherein he hath abounded toward us in

all wisdom and prudence" ; the apostle explains it, " having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself" ; here again it comes from the good pleasure of His will, " that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." Having placed the saints in all this fellowship and blessing, He imparts (as with Abraham—" Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I am about to do ? ") unto them His thoughts. Not only has He accepted us in Christ, but He will have everything brought under Christ's dominion and power. He is to gather together in one, all things in Christ—" even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will : that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation ; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." We are joint-heirs with Christ. Hence the prayer at the end of the chapter.

We cannot deny, we do not deny (whatever man's efforts to make the best of the world), that sin is in the world ; there is not a single thing (take dress for instance) that does not tell us that. There is not a single thing we are buying or selling, a single thing we are looking upon, that is not, in some sort, a proof of sin. All that man does for pleasure, is necessitated by sin ; Adam in Paradise had no need of it. What makes the world get on without God ? The principle of sin ; this is running through everything, it has got, so to speak, into the vital blood, and (though it be God's creation through which it runs) it runs through everything. Man builds his city, invents his instruments of music (Gen. 4), and strives to make the world happy without God. Introduce God, and His amazing work, where men are occupied with gain or with pleasure, it is all wrong and out of place. Whether for pleasure, or for gain, God must be excluded. That is the character of the whole world, and to tack on the name of Christ does not mend it ; an avaricious Christian (nominally such) is in nothing better than an avaricious heathen. God is lingering

over it, but the existence of the gospel in the world is proof that the world is lost. "We know," says John, "that the whole world lieth in the wicked one"; and again, "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." As it is, as a plain matter of fact, it is not God's inheritance. Who is called its god? Satan. God's title cast away, through the lust of men, and the pride and power of Satan, whom they follow, God has designated Satan "the god of this world," and made known to us (those who are of faith) the mystery of His will. The apostle speaks here of hope (*v.* 18). We have obtained an inheritance in Christ, and all things are going to be put under Christ; meanwhile (like Abraham, who had not so much as whereon to set his foot) "having nothing and yet possessing all things," the Christian walks through the world, as one beloved of God, in the consciousness that he is the object of God's purposes, and of God's delight. But what do we see in the Lord Jesus? Not merely that He has been designated the heir of all things; "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." So too our proper delight is in knowing that we are beloved of God, and that God will have us before Himself, and for Himself—His delight in us, and our delight in Him. It is as a consequence of this love, that we shall have the glory of the inheritance. Where are our hearts? what is our joy? are we journeying, aye journeying, through the world in the blessed, joyful confidence of this secret of God? Then will the world be to us a "dry and thirsty land"; instead of finding delight in things around, we shall have to guard against them as against that which would bring us down to Satan's ground. Are we taking the world, with its pleasures and its gain? If so, we are entering into Cain's portion, and not into that of Abel or Abraham: we are "enemies of the cross of Christ." Through these things Satan is deceiving the world. Are we taking the position (not of Adam before he sinned, not of Christ when He was in the world, neither of Christ in the glory, but) of the "men of the earth?"

The Lord give us to see, and so to estimate that which is God's object, that we may have done with this present evil world.

WHAT has all failed in the first Adam will all be accomplished in the last Adam, and much more, gloriously fulfilled. In Ephesians 1 there are two things as the portion of the church : one is not entirely fulfilled, and the other we have nothing of yet, the calling of God, and God's inheritance. The calling we get in Ephesians 1 : 4, 5. The first part of the calling is what is before God (*v.* 4), to be holy and without blame, etc. The second part of the calling is in connection with the Father (*v.* 5) as children. He has not only put us in a certain place, but has made known to us the mystery of His will, that is all His plan for Christ's glory, which is to gather together in one all things in Him. And the moment that comes I get the inheritance—not the calling only, but the the inheritance. Of this we have nothing now but the earnest of the Spirit. We have the calling. Colossians presents the same general truth, but more developed as to Christ.

In Colossians 1 : 15–18 I get the two headships of Christ—Head over all things, and Head of the body. He takes as Man what He created as God ; and, besides, He takes other men as fellow-heirs with Him. Thus we see in verse 21, that us who not only were in confusion and disorder, but were positively enemies, He reconciles. This consciousness has been lost by the professing church—that we are reconciled. The state of things is not reconciled ; but we are reconciled. The inheritance we cannot have, till the true Heir take it. Christ is not sitting on His own throne now, but on His Father's throne. When He sits down on His own throne, He will have us there with Him. He sits on His Father's throne by His title of Son. " To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Our present condition is to know that Christ is exalted, and we reconciled. But He has not taken the inheritance, nor, of course, have we. Our place before God is His calling—everything that is created will be our inheritance.

In Psalm 2 you have the counsels of God about Christ, to set Him on Zion as king. Adonai shall have them in derision —not Jehovah as such. These two points, Christ set as king on the holy hill of Zion, and owned to be the Son of God, you find in Psalm 2. In Psalm 8, you do not get Him as Son of

God, but as Son of man, put over everything that God has created—that He has created, for He is God. In John 1 : 49 you hear the Lord applying these two things. There Nathaniel owns Him as King of Israel, according to Psalm 2 and He says as it were, " That is over : I am not going to be King of Israel now." But you shall see greater things, the Son of man according to Psalm 8, with every creature subject. The place the church gets is to be joint-heirs. We take the place of suffering now. We only see half of Psalm 8 fulfilled yet. We see Him at the right hand of God, but not with all things put under Him. He is gathering now the joint-heirs. Nothing is yet fulfilled. For the redemption of the purchased possession He must come again.

Yet in Him we have redemption. There is no such thing recognised in Scripture, as a Christian doubting he is saved. And it is all a totally false pretension of humility. If my Father forgives me, and I doubt His forgiveness, I am not trusting Him. It is doubting God's word, or not receiving the truths He gives us : we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. Let a man fear temptation—doubt his own heart, that is another thing ; but not doubt God, or dread God. There is no such thing in scripture as a Christian without the Spirit of adoption, crying " Abba, Father." There is no such thing after Christ's death recognised in Scripture as a Christian not knowing he is saved. The thief on the cross was as fit to go to heaven as Paul, and he went there ; and none went not fit. I know that there is growth, of course ; but there is no meetness or fitness for heaven, except the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not Christianity to doubt, though many a real honest Christian does doubt. It is Christianity to know we are reconciled. If you have not peace, you have not got what Christ left for you. He says, " Come unto me, and I will give you rest." If you have not rest, am I to say either you have not come ? or Christ does not speak truth ? It may be bad teaching. Many a one will cry " Abba, Father," most heartily in his prayers, who would not own, if you asked him, that he was a child of God. Of course, he has the Spirit of adoption, though he does not know it. It is just selfishness that makes him doubt. In Romans 7, what is it he is talking about ? Just self—not Christ at all. Is that humility ? not a word about Christ and the Spirit! and I am told that is a Christian. There is nearly forty times

" I " and " me," and not once Christ and the Spirit, just the law and me; and poor things those are to bring together! Very useful for ploughing up, bringing down to self-knowledge. Then he sees there is no good in himself, and he gets set free, and it is all at an end. Romans 7 is just a quickened man, without the knowledge of redemption.

In 2 Corinthians 5 : 18 we are reconciled, but the state of things is not reconciled. After that we have the Spirit of God taking up our infirmities, and sympathising with us, as we are—taking up our groans.

When the Lord Jesus comes, the first thing He does is to take us up to Himself. He cannot take His inheritance till He get His joint-heirs. The object of Christ's love is to take us into the enjoyment of all that He enjoys Himself. Is He a son? I am a son. Is it life? He is my life. Is it peace? He says, My peace I leave with you. Is it love? As Thou hast loved Me I have loved them. There is nothing He has not taken us into. Of course, I do not mean His incommunicable Godhead. But He takes us into the same place with Himself, and over everything. When He comes again, then, and then only, we get the full fruit, when " he shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

Psalm 22. As soon as He is heard from the horns of the unicorns, He says, " I will declare thy name unto my brethren." So in John 20. " I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He is alone in the work of atonement, but as soon as that is accomplished, He says, Now I am going to have others with Me. " In the midst of the church I will sing praise to thee." When all the joint-heirs are gathered, then He comes and takes them all; and after that He begins to take the inheritance. The wilderness is the the place in which we are tested and tried, not for fighting. When we get into heavenly places to possess spiritual privileges, then we must fight Satan. Supposing I can say I am of the Lord's host, I am dead, I have crossed Jordan—not merely redeemed or simply crossed the Red Sea; but if I am dead, crossed Jordan, and become one of the Lord's host, then I need all His armour to fight His enemies; and if I get a wedge of gold, or a Babylonish garment, it will be detected by my want of power, by my being conquered in the fight.

When Christ takes us up there to be with Him, He puts Satan out. We shall be taken up to God and His throne

(not the Father's throne, that is the prerogative of Christ), then Satan is cast down. He will be in this world, then, in great rage, knowing his time is short; but we shall be above it all. Satan will never get up there again. When, those years being over, the Lord comes with us (when He appears, we appear with Him), then Satan is put in the bottomless pit, and the kingdom is fulfilled. Satan then is not merely turned out of heaven, but out of earth too. Before judgment begins to be executed, we are in glory in Christ. He that believeth shall not come into judgment, John 5 : 24. There are two things in the chapter shewing Christ's power: first, He quickeneth whom He will, this is, life-giving power; then judicial power, by which the wicked are obliged to own His power in spite of themselves. Christ will not have to make good His power in judgment where He has made it good in life. We are passed from death unto life. There is the resurrection of judgment in John 5. We are raised in glory when He changes our vile bodies, and fashions them like His glorious body. We shall ALL be conformed to the image of God's Son.

But there is another privilege we have now by grace, that of being workers together with Him. So when that time comes, as regards the blessing of Christ I shall have that as much as Paul, but as regards the activity of love and its results, Paul will have fifty thousand times more than I. For instance, Paul will have the Thessalonians for his crown, and I shall not. There comes in every man's little bit of service—in that you will have yours, and I mine. When He appears with us, then He sets up His kingdom. For Christ has a three-fold title. He created everything—that gives Him a title. He is the Son, and consequently the Heir; and He is the Man to whom God has determined to give everything—the title of redemption.

If I look for the worst power of Satan now, I must look for it in the so-called church. The responsible church has totally failed. In 1 Corinthians 3 you get three cases: first, a wise master builder, who did his work well; then you get persons who build badly, but who are saved themselves, building with rubbish, as wood, hay, stubble; and lastly, if a man corrupt the church of God, him will God destroy. Think of men bringing in Gnosticism. I will not refer to modern times. This is not merely building badly (all do so) but it is antagonism to the church of God and even to Christ.

Not one of the fathers, so-called, saving Irenaeus, held the full deity of Christ, or held redemption as Irenaeus did, who was a saint. They were affected with Platonic philosophy, which brought out Arianism after. Justin Martyr positively declares that the supreme God could not become a man—that it was a certain inferior *Logos* who did. People say we must have what was at the beginning. Knowing of nothing more primitive than Peter and Paul, I will therefore have what was at the beginning; but I will not have what was one hundred and forty years after the beginning. Justin Martyr was about so long after.

In the four first of the seven churches we see the history of what is called the Apostolic succession; in the three last, the history of Protestantism. There are three things in the Revelation: "Things thou hast seen," that is, the glory of Christ; "things that are," that is, the seven churches; "things which shall be hereafter," when we are caught up into heaven, and the final judgment of God sets in. In the first four churches, is given the complete history of the church to the end, closing in popery. There are two ways God uses to judge the existing thing by. He contrasts our condition with what He set up at first, and with the readiness to meet the Lord when He comes. The previous churches were referred back to what had been. Thyatira is referred on to His coming; and hence His coming is here first mentioned.

In the last three churches the Lord's coming is already named, and is kept before them till Laodicea, which is spued out. First, we have the Protestant warning, "a name to live and are dead." To Sardis He threatens what in Thessalonians is spoken of as only belonging to the world, His coming as a thief, that is, I will treat you just like the world. Philadelphia is a solemn word to us. It is the character of Christ which we are to suit ourselves to—"He that is holy, he that is true." After Thyatira we never get a reference to what he had seen walking among the golden candlesticks. There is no ecclesiastical position after that. What marks the thing the Lord owns now is, the absence of infidelity, or of ecclesiastical pretension: Christ's word against all such pretensions, and Christ's name against all infidelity. "Kept my word, and not denied my name": the promise to these is complete identification with Himself—"a pillar in the temple of my God—the name of my God—the city of my God—my new name." To those who

keep the word of His patience He says not now, "I will come to you as a thief, and ye shall not know when I come," but, "Ye have had patience: have a little more, I will soon be with you." Those who had a little strength are made pillars in the temple of His God.

We never get the direct work of God in the seven churches, because God cannot judge His own work. He walks through and sees how this thing has turned out and how that has; but you never get a direct intervention of God all through. Isaiah's prophecy, "the heart of this people is waxed fat," etc., was spoken nearly eight hundred years before the judgment was executed in nearly the last piece of New Testament history. Paul says in Acts 28, "Well did Isaiah say, the heart of this people is waxed fat"; "be it known unto you that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles," etc. It is more than eighteen hundred years since it was said of the church, judgment must begin at the house of God; and for all this time God has borne with it, but assuredly the judgment of the church will come.

THE POWER THAT WORKS IN US

EPHESIANS 3 : 16–21

THE subject of prayer here is that there might be an inward power put forth by the Holy Ghost. Paul's heart was desiring to see these saints in a deepening enjoyment of Christ, and this by an operation of the Spirit unlimited in its measure.

They had the inner man. the divine nature communicated to them. God had looked upon them in His great love, not only quickened them, but given them out of His fulness. They were in a family every member of which is purged from sin. " I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you." The incorruptible seed is not the word of God, but that which is communicated by the word of God. The Christian is thus put into a position in which the creature does not stand. The first Adam was innocent but corruptible. The Second man was pure and incorruptible. The believer now (in spite of that which is corruptible in him) has received this incorruptible seed, and that by the word of God. This they had : yet the heart of the apostle was not satisfied, but must go forth with energy that God the Holy Ghost might act in them according to their individual need, and that " according to the riches of his glory," not only eventually to be enjoyed, but a spring of power now to be given, and that without measure. It is the same Spirit to quicken and to strengthen now as will fill the whole bride. Paul put no limit short of this.

" That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith " (*v.* 17). This is not having happy feelings, or suavity of character, etc. It is one thing to be safe in the ark on the Ararat of God, and another thing for Christ to dwell in the heart by faith. Oh what a quantity of care goes out when Christ is there! If Christ is the master of the house, and dwelling in it, He does not let the dust and cobwebs accumulate, but He fills it altogether : and should a sudden start come to the heart, there will be found not fear, but Christ.

Some people make love among believers into a commandment. This is not the secret. If Christ is master of heart and conscience, He will teach brotherly love, and then will be comprehended " with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," *v.* 18. See the connection

of understanding with being rooted, etc., here and in Colossians 2 : 2. I shall not understand, save as divine (not human) affections are in exercise. Breadth, etc., of what? Soon after Christianity was launched, philosophy came in with progression. Paul knew no length, breadth, etc., save what was in Christ; Satan knows many, but they are only his depths and can be detected.

Next, we are set in the fulness of God. Thus we have had first the inward strengthening by the Spirit; next, this is shewn by Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, rooted and grounded in love, that they might comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height; thirdly, by this they might be filled with all the fulness of God; and fourthly, this is described as the power that works " in us." This fulness of God calls for something back. All that God gives Christ is yours: then I must praise Him. Can I be silent? Why not lift your voice to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you ask or think? We cannot expect too much.

Observe the distinct superscriptions of the prayers. The first is to God the Father of glory, the second is to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The glory of Christ as the servant of God and the glory of the only begotten of the Father are quite separate. It is very different for Christ to say, " My Father and your Father," and " My God and your God." When Christ took the servant's place, God was the Father of glory to Him.

Christ's sympathy flows out according to need down here. We have His sympathies. If we knew more of Christ's sympathies, the children of God might have more for one another. If full of sorrow yourself, go and sympathise with another, and your own will be gone.

Many a saint, if he knew what Christ's sympathy was, would wish to be left alone. Christ does not sympathise with my fleshly thoughts, but what He does is for the glory of God. He may have to break my will, and bring it to His. He will take up all the good, and He can make the face to shine; but it is of no use for us to ask for sympathy, if not set on the glory of God.

Our sympathy with Him is another thing: but He cares for us; John 16.

Let me ask (as exhortation) whether you pray for the acting of the Spirit as prayed for here. One of the reasons why the light and knowledge given connected with God and His Christ is so little entered into is connected with lack of prayer for the operation of the Spirit in this way. Christ is in heaven now. He was the centre of the thoughts of the little company who followed Him in Galilee. Why should not you and I have Him practically as the centre of our minds and hearts? All with them was simply done in the light and at the word of their Master. Had they boats to launch, nets to let down, all was at His word. This is a challenge to our hearts as to every-day circumstances. His presence in our hearts changes everything. It is very hard to be discontented when He is in the heart. How the thoughts of one's mind change with the company one is in! God has put us into a place where we may be sounding the unsoundable depths of the motives that have acted on Christ.

GRACE AND GOVERNMENT

EPHESIANS 4.

As soon as our hearts have personally found Christ connected with the glory of God, there are two things which we are called to enter into and distinguish. The first is the place of grace in which we stand as the children of God; in other words, the church's or Christian's position. The second is the government of God. This last unfolds itself in various ways. There is the millennial time, when a "Prince shall reign in righteousness": and it shall be said of the Lord, "Thou hast taken to thee thy great power." Then shall "the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord." All this blessing will be the effect of the government of God.

In another sense God is always governing in providence now. "The hairs of your head are all numbered." But do we not see a righteous person often put into the greatest trouble? This is not the normal effect of God's government. In the millennial time there will be the proper natural results of the Lord reigning. In another sense, for us now, "the Father judgeth every man's work." He has, no doubt, committed all judgment to the Son; but yet He chastens His children; Heb. 12. Christ says, "If any man will serve me, him will my Father honour." "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father," etc. This refers to the consequences of the child's conduct. It is the Father's government of His children; it is the Father's care watching over His children for their good, and is not like the government of the world in providence. God is dealing with the wicked now in grace.

I have said this of the children's position with the Father, that we may more undistractedly look to the Christian's position. The position of the church shews the fulness of God's grace. If I am one with Christ, there is no question of being accepted. If I am one with the Judge, I cannot look forward to the judgment with the thought of being condemned. Now it is certain that the church is the body of Christ, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." "We are members of his body," etc. You must see the amazing bearing and import of this truth—one with Christ, to realise the privileges it brings us into. It carries us into a place unlike any other, as to acceptance, righteousness, etc. When once we have this divine teaching in our souls, all is simple. It becomes a matter

of faith, and this produces a consciousness of relationship. If it is merely objective truth, it is of no value to me. I must be in it to know it and use it: and so with all these truths, you must be in them. You find the very prayers of a man betray where he is. A man cannot say "Father" in his soul, if he has not the consciousness of relationship. We cannot and ought not to have the enjoyment and feelings and affections belonging to it, if we have not it. The moment that through the teaching of God I have got into it, all is mine; not merely knowledge, but all peaceful and holy affections flow.

So with the church of God. We shall never enter into it, if not on the ground of grace. I cannot suppose too much and too great blessings when I see them flowing from God Himself. If from ourselves, what could you or I expect? I should be ashamed to think of anything I can have if I bring myself in; but if I bring Christ in, then I see nothing too much for Him.

In every possible way God had put man to the test; and now all is done with, as to myself (not as to the Father's government), and God is dealing in the way of grace.

In Scripture we have the fullest, and most detailed history of all that our hearts are, the history of Israel, etc. All was the proving of sin, but now it is the putting away of sin. Righteousness was not yet declared when God was proving man. It was not accomplished. Where was righteousness to be found before? Never, till Christ sat down on the throne of God. Innocency there had been—grace there had been, for He was spit upon, etc., but righteousness there was not. It was prophesied of, promised, but not one righteous could be found. All that the trial of man resulted in was, that weighed in the balance, he was found wanting.

See Jacob's sons, law given, and the calf made before Moses came down from the mount. See priest, prophet, king. All flesh was grass. At last God's Son came, and then they said, "Here is the heir, come let us kill him." The end of that was, "now is the judgment of this world." It is not executed yet, of course, but the consequence of this is that the righteous One has sat down above. It is all over with the world. They see Him no more, except when He comes in the glory of His power. Christ the new Man is accepted, according to His prayer "glorify thou me"—"I have glorified thee on the earth," and He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. There is our righteousness: all God's ways having

found man a sinner, even to the putting Christ to death, the righteousness of God is now declared—it is " unto all, and upon all them that believe."

Man has come short; man is set aside, root and branch, irreclaimable: but there is another Man. Thus it is all grace from beginning to end. He is the Source of the life and Accomplisher of the righteousness, and He has taken His place on the throne of God, and that is the foundation of the church of God. So that now it is not merely the fact that a person who believes is saved, but he is one with the Head in heaven. This is the immense privilege of our position, and now is sent down that " other Comforter " to dwell in us and to abide with us for ever. We are one spirit with the Lord. The Spirit unites us to Him, the Head, and we are one with another also—one body.

Here we discover the leading truth of what the church really is—" raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ." In this epistle there is nothing said of men living in sins, as in other places; but it speaks of being " dead in trespasses and sins " before this movement in the soul by God, who comes and finds the soul dead in sins, but He quickens it together with Christ. It is the whole power and working of the grace of God. We must get at the source, the perfect grace of God, before we can see where the church is set. We must be brought to that. Flesh can have no part. " They that are in the flesh cannot please God." " We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." We have conflict with it indeed, but we are not in it; and now " henceforth know we no man after the flesh," etc. The place of Christ at God's right hand is our place. Workings within to the humbling of the soul must go on till we come to this; no good thing is in us—" dead in trespasses and sins." Then, as of Israel, it can be said, " What hath God wrought? " Where and how am I to learn it? When I was dead, without any movement, Christ comes down. Not only is He come, but " made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He has come down; and now what are we to expect? According to what God is: let us not reason from what we are of ourselves. " If God is for us, who can be against us? " If God " spared not his own Son," etc. We may reason from what He has done to what He will do; and if I say, How can He save me from my sins? May I not say He must, when He

has done that—given His Son, and raised Him from the dead? Set down at God's right hand is the key, as well as the ground, of the church's place. What has God done all this for? For my sins. Christ was dead; He died for my sins; but why does He go up again? He is righteous, and has taken His place in heaven. The one righteous One was rejected on earth, and the one righteous One is taken to heaven. God was not ruling in righteousness on earth, and it would have been no adequate testimony to Him, the only righteous Man, for Him to have taken the righteous rule on earth then; but He would give Him a place in heaven, far above " principalities and powers," etc.

It is an accomplished righteousness, and therefore a preached righteousness. Because He was accepted, He could send down the Holy Ghost, which we received after He went up. He had been sealed Himself as the righteous One down here; but now the Holy Ghost comes down and seals us, because we " are made the righteousness of God in him."

Two things we have in consequence of this—the Spirit of adoption in our hearts, and union with Christ. We are not only blessed by Christ, but we are raised up together with, and made to sit together in, Him in heavenly places. All this is to shew we have it with Christ. Thus we are more than children of the Father, we are members of Christ. The Spirit was sent down to unite all the members in one body to the Head. If I am in the Spirit and not in the flesh (and you are in the Spirit and not in the flesh), how many Spirits are there? One. It is one Spirit in you and in me. One Holy Ghost has been sent down, uniting the members to the Head in heaven. There is not only life (that was given to Christ), but the Holy Ghost is sent down to gather together in one body. The other form of our relationship to Christ is the bride, united thus with Him in all He is and has. Is He righteous? so am I. Has He life? so have I. I cannot think of having any life, any righteousness, any glory, but what Christ has. What a place this gives us! We were dead, but now are put into the same place with Christ. " As he is, so are we in this world." This gives boldness in the day of judgment. In the earthen vessel surely we are, but " as he is, so are we "—" bone of my bone." There is an allusion in Ephesians 5 to Genesis 2. —We have entire association with Christ; not only as a man cherishes his own flesh does Christ care for us.

Eve was not lord in the garden of Eden, but Adam was. She was not the inheritance. What was she then? A helpmeet, dependent on him, taken out of him, enjoying what her husband had as her portion. So is the church with Christ. The title is in Him, but it is His delight to confer it on her. He has more delight in her having it than Himself. Not only then is the church safe—of course that—but who will be the Judge? Christ. How does He judge? According to the righteousness He has given me. I get before the judgment-seat by being glorified. What does the apostle say? "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord"—does he speak of himself? No! "We persuade men." If I see the terror of the Lord, I shall persuade others to take care and not despise the gospel. The glory of that day is the means of our present manifestation before God.

How entirely different our thoughts when we see this as our portion! There, in Him, is in principle what the church is—righteousness accepted, and not that we have accepted it, but God has accepted it, and then the Holy Ghost has been sent down. The bride is not yet complete. There are souls yet to be gathered in, while His long-suffering continues. When complete we shall be no longer here. There is another aspect of the church; "Builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This is the earthly character (Eph. 2): and however man may have spoiled it all, it does not alter the fact on God's part. God has a dwelling in His church. In paradise on earth God did not dwell. God was in heaven and man upon earth. Adam could not say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles," etc.; but directly God works in grace, He brings man into His house.

Man is to dwell with God, God will dwell with man; Exod. 15 : 17; chap. 29 : 45. God has given us a "promise of entering into his rest." God has a rest in grace. The fruit of grace is that He is going to bring us into this. If I can fathom God's heart, I can fathom grace. There is something in the blessed God we can never measure. Jesus is the measure. He has come down here, and He is gone into that blessed dwelling-place of God; and therefore He says, "Let not your heart be troubled. I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am," etc. There is a man gone before into the place where He will have us with Him. God cannot rest here, for He cannot rest where all is not according

to His mind and heart; but there all will be according to Himself; (Exod. 29, and afterwards Solomon's temple, but see Acts 7 : 48). God had a house till they sinned it away; but now God would have a house—the church, the habitation of God through the Spirit.

Man having been placed in responsibility and in all failed, God now brings in all the blessedness of what He has done by His own power. Is He glorified in His saints? He will be admired in all them that believe. Is the church now what it was at first, when "great grace was upon them all?" If you get half-a-dozen people together really in the Spirit, it is a triumph of grace—great occasion for thankfulness. It may indeed be said, Where is the beautiful flock? But God will have it. Down here, in its earthly character there is failure, but in the body there is no failure; it is not yet complete, for when the church is gathered, the long-suffering will be over. Therefore we know it is not all gathered; but the church at Jerusalem at the beginning was as much the habitation of God as when complete. There was no Achan in the camp then. Now "false brethren have crept in unawares" (Jude), and these are specially the objects of the judgment of God. But all this does not alter the character of the habitation of God.

Ephesians 4 gives administration of grace, in the gifts bestowed for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The apostles and prophets are the foundation, and then all that is needed is given. We may see weakness now, but there is nourishment in Christ the Head, and that cannot fail.

In 1 Corinthians 12 : 13, is one body, not merely having life: but "we are all baptised into one body," Jew and Gentile. Then he puts the whole train of gifts for the display of power. The apostles and prophets are carefully shewn in Ephesians 2, 3 and 4, to be the foundation; evangelists, pastors, teachers are to continue till the body is perfect. Whatever may be withheld in a time of ruin, the Lord gives, not what would take His people out of it, but fully and perfectly what they want in it.

Now, having seen the privileges of our position, we must remember the obligation never ceases to be what Christ has set us to be—to walk in holiness. The presence of the Holy Ghost never ceases to be the Comforter who abideth for ever.

The power is never absent. How is it then there is such weakness? "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," etc. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If my eye is not single, I cannot tell what to do or how to do it. The power is according to the will and holiness of God. The comfort is when God's thoughts supplant ours.

There is something strange in the want of confidence in divine love amongst saints—no consciousness of relationship. In the midst of failure, which one must and ought to feel, there is the Father's love. Has not God said He would go with the people, because they are a stiff-necked people?

I am in a place of relationship with God, and this nothing touches. The superstitions, etc., of men all around cannot touch us, if one has a sense of God's love. But what of the forgiveness of sins, etc.? Why, I know I had it ever so many years ago. The atonement? Why, this is the ground of it. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Everyone now who has faith in Christ is a member of the body of Christ. Love, then, naturally flows to all.

THOUGHTS ON EPHESIANS 4

THE first part of this chapter gives ecclesiastical, the second, individual godliness. In the previous chapter this connects itself with it, that we have not the counsels of God simply, but the realisation and verification of these counsels in Christ dwelling in the heart by faith.

First of all we see the thought in God before the foundation of the world, but now it has been brought out. God has brought these eternal counsels into actual realisation, and this leads, of course, to actual walk. God has brought out now (as soon as ever Christ had laid the foundation for it by the cross) " one body and one Spirit."

Though the vocation looks back at the counsels of God, it is brought into actuality in this world. It is a sorrow to the heart, and it ought to be a much deeper sorrow to us, comparing these thoughts of God and their realisation. This is the revelation of God's thought in full blessedness, but we see how little in any sense saints have acted up to the mind of God.

This epistle first gives us the thought of God without reference to how far it has been accomplished or not, the mind of God as it is ; though in chapter 3 we have the actual realisation of this in the power of the Spirit of God. Then comes the question of how far this is acted out. While Paul was there in the world, a continual struggle was going on ; they were Judaising—dragging down, but the standard was never lowered. You will never find that God lowers the standard, whatever the failure. He never can lower the standard ; He may have and has long patience, but He cannot take a lower standard. There are two standards of judgment : one is what God set up at the first ; the other is, are they prepared for Christ's coming ? There must be the going back to what He gave at the first. Malachi takes the Israelites back to Horeb : " Remember ye the law of Moses my servant which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel." Surely He will accomplish His promises, but He never lowers the standard. There may be a degree of light possessed or not possessed ; He deals with this in grace : where there is light, more is given ; but the standard is not lowered.

Paul unfolds the vocation, and then calls on us to walk worthy of it, in the first part of chapter 4. The necessary

effect of being brought so close to God as we are is lowliness and meekness; how can it be otherwise? The greatness of the grace makes nothing of self. This is not easy. In Christ's life you see it plainly enough, in Philippians also. Then the effect of lowliness and meekness is to manifest the unity of the Spirit. "With lowliness and meekness," that is what we ought to be: then the effect to others will be longsuffering; others may not be lowly and meek. Practically this brings God in and self is gone. The power of love walking with God brings in longsuffering to others. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." As servants of Christ, and self being gone, we are looking at others. "Yea, and if I be offered [poured as a libation] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

The mere fact of their being Jews and Gentiles in the church, and the constant tendency among the Jews to think little of the Gentiles, made this needed, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit," not the unity of the body—God keeps that. Then it comes to be jealousy for Christ's glory. What comes from the Spirit is always one; why are we not all agreed? Because our own minds work; if we had only what we have learned from the Scripture, we should be all the same. The body is one that cannot be kept by our endeavours. All this is the practical realisation of what is in the purpose of God. If a man has the Spirit of Christ, he is a member of Christ. Jesus was the Christ on earth, but He was a Christ rejected: "Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing." Then a much larger scheme and purpose of God comes out. He that was the Messiah goes down to the lower parts of the earth; the Creator goes below creation, and now He is above all creatures. Having done that, He delivers persons from Satan and makes them vessels of His power for building up those that are delivered. When "he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." You do not find miracles, tongues, signs of power here, but that which, as immutable and faithful Head, He gives for accomplishing His purpose.

If you take the state of things here, through the unfaithfulness of those to whom service was committed, "the wolf catcheth the sheep and scattereth them," but he cannot touch the power of the Head. You may have everything upset, but everything works together for good; you never can touch

that. But for this, if one was to think of the saints, he would break his heart.

"I stand in doubt of you." "I have confidence in you through the Lord." You cannot touch the power and faithfulness of the Head, nor confidence in the Head, though there is disorder all around.

"For the perfecting of the saints"—that is the object. The specific object of ministry is the perfecting of the saints. This never fails: and it is done in various ways. The Corinthians had all sorts of gifts, but they failed in walk. We find various differences among the saints. Individual perfecting is the direct object of Christ—that each individual should grow up to the standard of Christ. Then comes the increase of the body. The first object is, that my heart or your heart is to be up to the measure of Christ; consequent on that comes the increase of the body. It is wonderful if you take the sphere and scope there is here. Christ goes to the lower parts of the earth, then above all heavens; from thence comes ministry.

We now get what the truth is in Jesus. If we have learned Him ourselves, we get this putting off the old man, and putting on the new. This is stated as a fact in Colossians: "Seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man." The truth as it is in Jesus is the having put off the old man, and having put on the new.

There are two great elements of the Christian life: one is this putting off the old man and putting on the new; the other, that the Holy Ghost dwells in us. "Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children." Supposing this done, God's conduct is the rule and measure of mine. "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." We are in the new creation, we have Christ. What is Christ? The manifestation of God. The truth of my state and condition, the truth in Christ is that I have put off the old man, and put on the new. Christ is our life: it is a new creation—created after God "in righteousness and true holiness," not as innocent Adam. In Colossians 3 it is expressed in another way, "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"—that was not Adam's case at all. God is known. I have got now the divine nature fully revealed in Christ, in a Man. We are created now after God; we have the knowledge of what God is, not of what man ought to be.

If as a poor sinner, I am brought to God, I know His love the very first instant; I know the righteousness and love of God. There is growth, of course. I have Christ instead of Adam. I have put off the old man as nothing worth, and put on the new. We have to contend with the old as an enemy. I own nothing but Christ for my life. The knowledge of good and evil has come in, and I cannot take any standard of it (now Christ has revealed Him) but God Himself.

God has made Himself known as Almighty, as Jehovah, and as Father. As Almighty, He said, "Walk before me and be thou perfect"; as Jehovah, "Thou shalt be perfect with Jehovah thy God"; as Father, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

The second great principle is, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The precious blood of Christ having been sprinkled upon us, the Holy Ghost dwells in us: this is of immense value to us. The new nature cannot reveal anything, the new nature has no power. What we see in Christ (there was power in Him, of course) is dependence and obedience; these are the great leading traits of the new man. The Spirit of God reveals the things of Christ, encourages me, shews me His faithfulness and His love, and is power in me. God is dwelling in me in power, giving me liberty, power, sonship, but at the same time the sense of God's presence. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" If He is grieved, the effect is that power is gone, and the conscience is bad; the Spirit then becomes a rebuker. If the queen were in the house, every right-minded man and every thing would bow to her.

How our hearts cultivate things that are not of Christ! Whatever is not fit for His presence is not fit for my heart. How often things are allowed in the heart which make the heart unwilling (not at the bottom, of course) to let Christ back! It is to me a most striking expression of what the Christian is that he has put off the old man, and put on the new, and that, having the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, he is not to grieve the Holy Spirit. "Be ye imitators of God as dear children." Grace has put us in the place distinctly; and this is the way we are to walk. He takes the two essential names of God (He has many attributes), love and light; both are that in which we have to say to God. However could I imitate God? you may say. But what do you think of Christ?

Is He not God ? and God just where we want Him ? " Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Do you look at Christ and see what that light is ? Christ is the pattern and model. If you wake up from the sleeping state of soul (sleep is for the time as bad as death), Christ will give you light. " Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Christ gave Himself up entirely : the law never asked that ; the law only said, " love your neighbour as yourself." In a world of sin and sorrow there is another principle, the giving up of self for others ; and I get another principle of Christ's love, it was " to God." If as a creature I love an unworthy object, my love is unworthy. Divine love does not want a worthy object. "For us," and "to God!"—if we reached that, we should get the right thing for Christians, the giving up of self and for a worthy object. What a picture of the Christian—the old man gone, the new man put on, the Holy Ghost in us, and Christ the pattern! Surely it is a blessed privilege and a truth. Christ's love went on as a divine source when everybody was against Him. Oh! what a calling, beloved brethren. If we are only babes in Christ, we may be consistent with what we have got. Where a person does walk in that way with God, the soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness in a dry and thirsty land.

If we let Christ practically out of our hearts, it costs a deal to bring Him back again.

GROWING UP IN CHRIST

EPHESIANS 4 : 1–16.

ONE cannot help seeing in such a passage as this the profound interest the Lord takes in blessing. There is profound love in it, as well as that it is a fact that He delights in blessing. His purpose is to bring us into the enjoyment of His own blessedness. His thoughts are blessings ; and there is none anywhere else but in Him. If I speak of blessing, it must be what is in the heart of God. A father's thoughts of giving to his children are measured by his love for them. When we see what is in God's heart for us, and that all His thoughts have the form and power of blessing, what must they be for us! He is bringing us to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ—this is to be the result ; but it is the principle and spring of blessing that was in my mind to speak upon. He is conforming us as to His own thoughts in blessing at the end. The objects of this love, we, abject sinners taken up by Him, shew the greatness of His love.

Christ is the great Workman of it all. It is by Christ that He does it. When God sets about to bless, it is by the Son of His love. It is an immense foundation for us to rest upon—not only strong, but wide and large and deep. " He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." " He descended first into the lower parts of the earth." What, then, is to escape the power of Him, who has been borne up to the throne of God, after going down to the very lowest place of death under sin ? He has been in the lowest place of misery and death, and is taken up to the highest place in glory—the throne of God—and all between is filled up by Christ. This nothing can escape. He went down to the place of death and sin, " made sin for us," and went up to the throne of God! There is strength for me a poor sinner, something to rest on. Yet it is not distant from us, but we have the consciousness of its being in and around us. It is said in Revelation of the " city," "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

The Lamb is nearer to my heart than any. He has known me better than any, better than I know myself ; and this Christ who dwells in our hearts by faith is the One we shall meet there. I shall find One in heaven nearer and dearer to my heart, than any one I know on earth. Nothing is so near to us as the Christ that is in us, and nothing is so near to God

as Christ. Yet the world is in a man's heart. All that is agreeable and outwardly good in this world finds its echo in a man's heart, and all the evil that has come in finds its place there too. Christ was here amidst it all. He met it all without having the evil in Him, yet He knows it all. Everything we feel, all that passes through the heart of man, Christ has gone through, not by grasping at the thing, but by resisting the evil. With all the sensibilities of the heart to good or evil (and this makes the heart of man such a wonderful thing) Christ can meet all. The centre key to all this is Christ: He has power to put away the evil. If there was one thing where my heart could not rest on Christ, it would be dreadful. All have the knowledge of good and evil, even the unconverted man. Without Christ he sets about racking his heart to find any good thing that is under the sun. All the best affections of a man are the occasion of his greatest distress, because sin has come in: the heart gets pulled and torn every way, but it must go through it. See a wife losing her husband, a mother her children. The instant I see Christ in all this trial, I find the perfect good God delights in. Divine sympathy is found in God Himself. I may have trial and conflict, I must have it in passing through the wilderness; but I become weaned from the thing that was a snare to me by looking to Christ in it. Present confidence in Christ is needed in trial (losing a near relative, etc.) but the practical effect is that every trial a man goes through gives him (if the heart is thus trusting) to know more and more of what Christ is to meet the need, and more of Christ as possessing Him.

"I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself"; and there we find all the unfoldings of what God is in Christ. I cannot do without Christ. I want manna in the wilderness: God gives it to me; and not only do I get all this, water, manna, etc., but I have Christ Himself in it all. No matter what it is that exercises my heart in the knowledge of good and evil, and the need of the heart in consequence, it makes Christ more known and more enjoyed. Our natural portion as Christians is to enjoy God. Where has God planted us? In the enjoyment of an accomplished redemption; and the result is that love has not only been manifested towards us, but poured out in us. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which He has given unto us. We dwell in God—for His love is infinite, but I am in it;

I dwell in it, and He dwells in me: I, a poor thing, a nothing, dwell in Him. I must learn it, as a sinner, in Christ. A proud sinner will try to prescribe to God this and that, etc., but God will have His way; and blessed it is that it should be so. We are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"—this is the "vocation." What a thought! What a bringing down, not of heaven, but something more, by special blessing bringing Him down to dwell in us. God would not dwell in angels; there is not the same want in them, but He will make Himself better known to angels, through His kindness towards us by Christ Jesus. There is a great deal more for us than the bringing down heaven. "Whosoever shall confess Jesus the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God."

What is the first practical effect of this calling to be "the habitation of God through the Spirit?" "With all lowliness and meekness," etc. (chap. 4 : 2). A vessel of God! All the passions of the flesh there, but having the presence of God makes us unspeakably happy; that is our portion! "In all lowliness," etc. A man who is humble needs not to be humbled. There is no safety but in being low. Then what is the consequence if self is not working, and there is lowliness? Why love works. I cannot be happy with you all, if self is working; but if self is not working, love is, and I am full of love towards you all. What a spring of blessedness in communion there is; so far as self is down, broken to pieces, there is an outgoing of perfect love to the brethren. "Love is of God." His nature is at work when we love one another. The spring of the fellowship we find just now is God being here. God is our joy, and love (God's own nature) working, and God our common object. There are trials and difficulties for us all; but there is blessed joy in knowing one another thus, and seeing Christ in one another. "Receive ye one another to the glory of God." If we meet a Christian, though he may be a stranger, we can be more intimate with him than with one's own family who are not. Why? Because God is there.

Another thing observe, there is the consciousness of what this unity is. "There is one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith," etc. We are brought together, not only through being united, but by what we possess together, one Lord, one faith, etc., rich or poor. Another has his particular trials, and I mine; but both have God.

" One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." God is above the world ; you cannot tell me of one thing God is not above, and therefore there is not one thing that can separate me from His love. He is "through all." You cannot find yourself in trouble and God not there ; you cannot find yourself in any difficulty, perplexity, and not find God through it all. And He is " in you all." He has come to be the spring of all happiness in us. If I know what water is, it is by drinking ; if I know what sweetness is, it is by tasting it ; if I know God, it is by His being in me. We can look upon one another and see God in us all. Then these light afflictions, what are they ? God is come to take possession of us, and He is the spring in our hearts also. He comes to make us love, because He loves. We shall find it is fully so in heaven. If anything is a safeguard against evil, it is that such an one dwells in us ; but it is more—it is the spring in the new nature, God's nature.

The perfecting of the saints is before God, and should be before us. Christ is the object of His thoughts. I must have these loved ones like Christ ; therefore what God does is to make them grow up unto Christ. In the unity of the body, and in all the communion, and through all the exercise of heart, we have the end of all. In ministering to you or you to me, it is to grow up into Christ, that there may be more of Christ in us. All the flow of Christian affection, all the enjoyment we have here, is for this end. I can look at my brother and know he is going to be in heaven with me. The enjoyment of all this shuts out the world : you are not thinking of your cares and troubles now. Fellowship with the brethren is perfect deliverance from all that is of the flesh ; flesh cannot enter into it, all that is of the world is gone. I am dead to it. Every bit of fellowship I have with a brother is a proof that outside things are gone and done with. The more we are individually full of divine things, the more this communion with each other is realised. Two together, if both are spiritual, open the sluices that all the wells in the world cannot dry up. The power of the Holy Ghost, that makes me overcome now, will make me enjoy heaven, where there is nothing else : " they that dwell in thine house will be still praising thee." The power of evil, of the world, of Satan, is all gone. Our common joy now is in Christ, in the communion of His love ; and when we are with Him, it will be completely without alloy.

THE CHRISTIAN WALK

We find in Ephesians 4 and 5, a very seasonable unfolding of the principles of the Christian walk, of the height of the principles which ought to govern it, and of its moral elevation, to which I desire to draw the attention of your readers. In chapter 4 the apostle, after having developed Christian doctrine as to our relations with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (relations founded on these two names, and afterwards the relations of the church with Christ), begins his exhortations to Christians with respect to their walk. They ought not to walk as the rest of the nations in the corruption which was bound up with the state of darkness in which they were found; they had not so learned the Christ, if they really knew what the truth is in Jesus, namely, to have put off the old man and put on the new man, which is created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

For there is the truth such as it is in Jesus; not that we should strip off, but, inasmuch as we are risen with Him, that we have put off the old man and put on the new man. There then is the first principle of the Christian walk: we have put on the new man; and here is its character, created according to God; not only the absence of sin, which was realised in the first Adam, but according to God fully revealed to one who has already the knowledge of good and evil, and created according to the thoughts of God Himself as to good and evil, according to the estimate which God by His very nature has of good and evil. What an immense privilege! The new man, born of God, is, in his nature, the reflection, and the intelligent reflection, of the nature of God Himself. Wherefore the apostle John says he cannot sin because he is born of God. Also we find in the Epistle to the Colossians, which is parallel to this, "renewed into knowledge* according to the image of Him who has created him." Such is the first principle of the Christian walk, a nature which comes from God, created as an expression and reflection of what He is in righteousness and holiness of truth. Here it is a life, a nature, that which we are.

The second principle is the presence of the Holy Spirit. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom you have been

* The Greek word translated "knowledge" means full knowledge, personal knowledge, so as to recognise anyone.

sealed for the day of redemption." It is God Himself who dwells in us by His Spirit. Nothing unworthy of such a guest, unworthy of God Himself, ought to go on in us. Also, our walk should be characterised by that which characterises God Himself, for His love is active in us. Consequently we find here love also, and not only righteousness and holiness. We forgive one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. Christ being ascended on high, and thus the righteousness of God being established, ourselves perfectly purified by the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is come down, and the bodies of the believers are become the temple of God. It is the seal of God put upon their persons, the earnest of their entire redemption and of their part in the inheritance of glory.

The walk of the Christian ought then to be the manifestation of the divine nature, and of the ways of God in grace towards us. Such is the instruction which chapter 4 gives us; but chapter 5 furnishes still more light. Who is it that has been the expression of this nature in man down here below? Evidently it is the Saviour, the image of the invisible God. Thus, God Himself becomes the expression of this divine life in man, the model of our conduct. Let us examine our chapter 5 in this point of view, that we may draw from it the instruction it contains.

"Be ye therefore imitators of God." Have I not been right in speaking of the moral elevation of the Christian walk? Be imitators of God! Partakers of His nature and of the indwelling of His Spirit, we are called to imitate Him in the principles of His conduct. But then, as we have said, Christ is the perfect example of it; as the Holy Spirit goes on to say, "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." This adds a very precious element to the principles of the Christian walk. Here love has not the character of the divine love which pardons, being above evil, when a wrong is done to us, as God pardons (in virtue of Christ) sin against Him. Here it is devotedness, an offering made of oneself to God. It is no more a law which would have one love his neighbour as himself, which would be blessedness without any remains of evil in the world. It is not loving God with all the heart, which supposes that evil is not there. It is a devotedness, which supposes evil, a necessity which is the occasion for the exercise of love. One is given up for others,

one is devoted. But for love in man, there must be a motive, an object. For this love to be perfect, the object, the motive of the love, must be perfect. If one is given up to a man, there may be a noble devotedness in it, but the motive is imperfect: love does not and cannot rise above its object. Just so, that there should be devotedness, there must be needy objects. These two elements are found in Christ. He gave Himself for us, for needy beings, objects of compassion on His part; but He gave Himself to God, infinite and perfect object, which could not have been, had He only given Himself to us and for us.

It is thus we ought to walk, ready to sacrifice ourselves for our brethren, always in self-abnegation to serve them, whilst offering ourselves to God Himself, to Christ whose we are. Thus the measure of our conduct is that of God Himself, Christ being our example in His life here below, in order that we should add love, the bond of perfect action, to brotherly kindness. It is not said that we are love, which is God's prerogative. He is love, and He loves, as to us, without any other motive than what He is; which could not be the case with a creature. We imitate Him in the matter of the wrongs that have been done to us. But the love which acts from itself towards others is of God alone.

Again, light is a quality in itself, a purity which also manifests everything. It is the second name that God gives Himself to express what He is. God is light. So Christ, when He was in this world, was the light of the world. We were in darkness, we are light in the Lord. Thus in the Epistle to the Philippians we find, respecting Christians, that which might be said in every point of Christ Himself, " blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." In this pure nature we share, inasmuch as we have Christ for our life—purity in motives, in thoughts according to the divine nature; that which, manifested in this world, manifested the true character of all that is around us. We are light in the Lord.

Thus the two names, the only ones God gives Himself to express what He is, love and light, become the expression of what the Christian ought to be in his walk. He is even light in the Lord.

There exists another sort of motive and of rule, the relationships in which we are found, as father and children, husband and wife, master and slaves. We are in these relationships also with God and with His Christ. But it is another ground on which I do not enter at present. That of which I speak is the Christian character, as having divine life in Christ and the Holy Spirit: so that one has to imitate the conduct of God, and to take Christ for model on the earth.

" CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH "

EPHESIANS 5 : 22, 23.

REMARK, beloved brethren, how the grace of God has associated us with Himself and with Christ, though, of course, remaining Himself meanwhile in the supremacy of infinite Godhead, in which none can be associated with Him; but He has made us partakers of the divine nature, and given us His Spirit to dwell in us, so that we realise what He is, and become one with Christ through being united to Him.

We find, in the early part of Ephesians 5, that we are called to be " imitators of God, as dear children, and to walk in love." Love is His nature; and we see this exemplified in a man, if we take Christ as the pattern of it. " Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."

Besides this we get another word brought before us, which also expresses God's nature: that is light; and it is said: " Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." And, here too, Christ is given as the perfect expression of what is put before us. " Awake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." As a man in the world, He was the expression and pattern of light.

But after this he adds, " Be filled with the Spirit "; for, though we are made partakers of this divine nature, which is light, and we are called to love after the pattern of God in Christ, yet after all we are but poor human creatures, powerless in ourselves; and the Spirit is the only power we have for everything.

In God's mind it is everything for us to have fellowship with Himself. He has put us before Himself in love; He has made us His sons and daughters—the objects of His delight; and He should be the object of our delight. So much for the first relationship that we find here. It is with the Father as sons, and in this Christ is the Firstborn among many brethren.

The second is union with Christ now glorified: " We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." We are livingly united to Him, as members to a head. I cannot get closer to him than being a member of His body, and in the same glory with Himself. This relationship gives us the indissoluble union of Christ and the church. " Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and

gave himself for it . . . and let the wife see that she reverence her husband." Though quite true as regards husband and wife, it is a figure of Christ and the church.

But, though we are united to Him, He is ever pre-eminent, and what even gives its value to this relationship is the necessary pre-eminence in it, as in everything, of Christ. When Moses and Elias were on the mount with the Lord, they were in the same glory as He was, and talking with Him of what was nearest His heart, and nearest His Father's heart too; they were in familiar intercourse with Him. But, even then, the moment Peter talks about making three tabernacles, one for each, thus putting them on an equality, the Father's voice comes in and owns His Son, and Moses and Elias at once disappear. I only use this to illustrate what I mean; and so it must always be. There must always be the eternal blessedness and pre-eminence of His Person, and the nearer we get to Him the more conscious we shall be of this. If I know a man indeed intimately, I shall surely get to know his foibles. In Christ, the more I know Him, the more I shall only get to know deeper, and divine, excellence. There is no fear of near acquaintance diminishing respect towards Him: the more I feel His love, the more I shall feel that He is supreme in it. Intimacy with His love only shews out its excellence, and produces more adoration and love in me.

God is supreme in love. It is not said in chapter 5 that we are to be love; we cannot be free and supreme in it; we are said to be light, because the new man partakes in the purity of His nature. And in the love of Christ we find the working of this supreme goodness, and in a man, so that following Him we can walk in it, though we cannot say we are love, as we say we are light.

But, in the case of the church, at the close of chapter 5, we have a love of special relationship, not simply the goodness and sovereign love of God; yet the spring and source of all is in the unsought love of Christ, in which He acts in the thought of His own grace, when there was nothing to draw it out. He has to purchase what He loves, and form it for Himself. He " gave himself for it ": and when He gets it, He cleanses it for Himself.

But there is yet another point of view. He presents it " to himself." When God had made Eve, He presented her to Adam; but here we get the glory of Christ's Person. Being

a divine Person He presents the church to Himself, having formed it and perfected it, so as to be suited to Himself. He does all for the church. Let us now see a little of the way in which He does it.

The first thing of all is His own unmotived love. " He loved the church," perfectly, divinely, infinitely; we here find the utterness of His love. " He gave himself." He did not only do something for it: " He gave himself! " And this is constantly repeated in the word; it is even said that " He gave himself for our sins," our sins being that which was in the way between us and God. As I look at Christ's love, I see that it had no motive but in itself, and it gives itself: nothing is held back. He is wholly and altogether mine; He has given Himself, and all is lumped up in that. The self-sacrifice of Christ was absolute: it was Himself, all He is, and all He was in His perfection. The whole motive of His nature was engaged in it: " He gave himself." And this is a wonderful thought, if our hearts could only get hold of it. It is not that He gave His blood, and gave His life, though that is true, and we may speak of it distinctively, for Scripture does; but the point here is the character of His love; so it says, " He gave himself." The motive was self-giving.

Mark here how, as regards the process of fitting the church for Christ, loving it and giving Himself for it goes first. It does not say, He cleansed and washed it so that He might have it, and then loved it because it was cleansed and fit to be loved. No. He gives Himself for it, and possesses it with a perfect title; Himself given for it, in the absolute completeness of His whole heart, according to which He has taken it to Himself. He gives Himself for it because He loved it; and now, He says, it must be cleansed and made fit for me. Not, it must be happy—happy it is, no doubt—but not only so; it must be made fit for Himself. I cannot be satisfied if a person I love is not what I like him to be—my children or wife, for example. It is not a feeling of discontent —I do not mean that—but a want of full satisfaction. So Christ sets about making the church what He would like it to be. He cleanses it by " the washing of water by the word." As He said before: " Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

As the word comes from God, it judges all that is contrary to God, by the revelation of what is in God, so that it may

make me like what it reveals. " For their sakes," He says, " I sanctify myself." As Man, He set Himself apart as the perfect expression of what is divine in a man, or man according to God. So it is not that I am what I ought to be, but that I am connected with Christ, who is the expression of what I ought to be, and forms me into His likeness. " We all, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." That is the way it cleanses : it purifies our motives, thoughts, and apprehensions, thus changing us into the same image from glory to glory. But He is the doer ; He redeems us, cleanses us, sanctifies us, and presents us.

There is also a thought here which is full of the deepest interest ; and that is, that we cannot separate the cleansing from the glory. The cleansing is according to the glory, and, when the body is changed, the state of holiness is according to the glory revealed ; see 1 Thessalonians 3 : 13, where we should have said " unblameable in holiness " in our walk ; but we read, in the presence " of God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." We cannot really get on without looking at Christ in glory. It is said that " He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing : but that it should be holy and without blemish." That is the cleansing. Practical cleansing is by the power of the revelation of the glory of Christ. But let us always remember that this cleansing is not in order that we may belong to Him, but that it is " Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might cleanse it."

Another thing that we find as regards the church, and this ought to comfort us in these dark days, and in the darker ones which we see coming. He goes on to say : " No man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." It is not only that He fits it for Himself—makes it according to His own mind ; but the same love that fits it, watches over it in the circumstances of weakness in which it is found, as it passes through the world. Why, he says, a man's flesh is himself ; Christ takes care of Himself in taking care of the church. As he said to Saul : " Why persecutest thou me ? " You are touching Me in persecuting them. Christ does not separate the saints down here from Himself. He is interested in them, cares for them,

nourishes and cherishes them as a man does the flesh of his own body. And in this He can never fail. The darkness may be great, and the power of evil strong, and growing stronger (not that God is not working, for He is ; and when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him, and is doing so, and preparing the coming of the Lord), but no more than a man can hate himself, can Christ fail in doing this—nourishing and cherishing the church.

The Lord has long patience with all this growing evil (we may pray that things may go quicker, that He would bring the end on more rapidly, calling in His own ; but, if so, it will bring evil out more rapidly too, and the judgments that are coming on the earth, but yet we may desire it) ; but all through the faith of the saint can reckon on the care and love of Christ. You cannot put me in any circumstances where the love of Christ cannot suit me.

Nor even does the working of unbelief hinder. For, when those who are believers cannot use the power that has been brought in against evil, what is to be done ? We read, that when they brought one possessed of a demon to the disciples, and they could not cast him out, the Lord says : " How long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? " If you cannot use the power I have brought in, what is the use of staying with you ? But He adds, " Bring him hither to me." Even if the faith of the church fail, and one were alone in the trial, individual faith will always find grace in the Lord Jesus Christ for its want. Just as the father of the child cried out with tears : " Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief." Christ cannot fail ; and we on our side must not be like Elijah, saying, " Lord, they have thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword ; and I, even I only, am left ; and they seek my life to take it away " (and mark at the moment he had thrown down their altars and slain their prophets), and then run away. What we want to say is : Well, Christ never fails, and there cannot be a want in Christ's church without there being an answer to it in Christ's heart.

All we want, beloved friends, is to have the eye fixed on Christ, from whom all grace and love flow, and to be sanctified in heart and spirit thereby, while waiting for Him, who has given Himself for us, so that we might be like Him even now, while walking through this world.

CONFLICT IN HEAVENLY PLACES

EPHESIANS 6 : 10–18.

THE very blessings of the church (as in Eph. 1 : 3) set us into a sort of conflict, which, without such blessings, we should not have. So the church is subject to more failure than either Jews or Gentiles were, because they were not called to the same blessing. A Jew might do many things that would be monstrous in a Christian, and yet find no defilement in his conscience. The veil that was over the knowledge of God being rent, the light shines out ; and the consequence is that this light which has come out of the holy place cannot tolerate evil. Christians are in a more dangerous position, if not walking in the light, than Jews. Satan may draw and entice me with many things, which would have no power against me if I were not so favoured. " Be strong in the Lord " ; here is the place of strength. There is no strength but in Christ—I have none at any time, except as my soul is in secret communion with Him, and through Him with God the Father. The direct power of Satan is toward this point, to keep our souls from living on Christ. Put on the whole armour of God ; there is no standing against Satan without this. Strength is always the effect of having to do with God in the spirit of dependence.

We see in 1 Samuel 14 the contrast between Saul and Jonathan ; between confidence in God overcoming all obstacles, and self failing with all the resources of royalty. Jonathan clambered up on his hands and feet, confident in God, and the enemies were overcome. Saul, when he saw the work going on, not knowing the Lord's mind, calls for the priest. He had a right intention, but not a simplicity of dependence on God, when inquiring what he should do, and spoils all by his foolish oath. It is said of Jonathan that " he wrought with God." God was with him, and he had strength and liberty, not a humiliation we have often felt, because he wrought with God. When we are walking in dependence on God, there will always be liberty before God. Jonathan knew what he should do, and took some honey, because he went on in liberty, for God was with him, whilst Saul in legality had put himself and the people into bondage.

The word then, after grace in Christ has been fully shewn

throughout the epistle, is, "Be strong in the Lord," *v.* 10. We have the privilege here of individual dependence on God. Everything may be dark, but the Lord tells us to be strong. This is always accompanied with lowliness of heart; come what will, when the Lord is rested on, we are strong.

We are called to put on the panoply of God, to take it to us (*v.* 11–13). And no wonder: the conflict is not with men but with evil spirits (*v.* 12). Who but an unbeliever can overlook or despise them? They are principalities and authorities; they are the universal lords of this darkness; they are spiritual wickednesses in the heavenly places. Truly to withstand such we need the whole armour of God; which, remember, is not a question of standing but of practical power, and this is in entire dependence.

If we pray, be it observed, without searching the word, or read the word without prayer, we may get no guidance, for Jesus said, "If my words abide in you, ask what ye will," etc.; without this I may be asking some foolish thing that would not be given. We are to stand against the wiles of the devil, not his power. It is not knowing Satan that enables us to discover his wiles, but the keeping in God's presence. It was always so with Christ, because He was always dependent on God. Stand, having your loins girt about with truth. Truth is never really ours but as the affections are ordered by it. If the soul of the hearer be not in communion with God in the truth he hears, his loins are not girt with it. The breastplate of righteousness supposes not merely this, but that we have nothing on the conscience (*v.* 14). Christ's blood made it good; and walking in the Spirit keeps it so.

Verse 15. The gospel of peace is ours in Christ; but I must have the spirit of peace in my heart, and be sanctified by the God of peace, the soul in communion with God, with Him in the spirit of peace; and without this how can the saint walk as always having peace? He is thus prepared to walk by the gospel.

Verse 16. Whether I look at the sin that made grace necessary, or at the power which caused me to enjoy it, I may walk in perfect peace against every source of sorrow. Every fiery dart is quenched by confidence in God—the shield of faith. It is as essential for the conflict as for saving the soul. We need to cherish confidence in the grace of God all through.

Verse 17. I hold up my head because I know I am safe; salvation is mine. I must first get that which is internal: that which is wrought in me is power. Before I use the sword of the Spirit, I must first have the loins girded about with truth, the heart covered with righteousness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and then (the shield of faith being up and the helmet of salvation on) I can take the sword of the Spirit. Nothing is more dangerous than to use the word if it has not touched my conscience. I put myself in Satan's hands if I go beyond what I have from God, or what is in possession of my soul. To talk with saints on the things of God, beyond what I hold in communion, is most pernicious; to fight without it is fatal.

Verse 18. The word always must deal with ourselves before others, but prayer is the expression and exercise of dependence. If a person asks me a question, and I answer without speaking to God about it—going direct, it will be more likely to lead him from God than to God. When a question or difficulty comes, do we turn to God? We may have turned to God before, and the thing is answered, and we ought to have such power of prayer, that there would be no difficulty when any circumstance arises. If supplication be thus continual, there would be no occasion to ask Him about particular things when they come before us.

"Supplication in the Spirit." All acceptable prayer is not, I think, prayer in the Spirit. A wish or desire expressed to God, in all the confidence of a child to his father is heard, but this is not necessarily "prayer in the Spirit." It is the power of the Spirit in us looking for blessing as walking in the Spirit of God—that is such prayer; not even a difficulty here when living really in the power of communion. We have that energy of supplication which looks for answers—for all answers, and for myself too—watching thereunto with all perseverance. Suppose you begin the day with a sweet spirit of prayer and confidence in God: in the course of the day, in this wretched world you find a thousand cares and agitations; but if you are spiritually exercised, alive to see the things of God, everything will be a matter of prayer and intercession, according to the mind of God. Thus humbleness and dependence should mark all a saint's actions.

Instead of being full of regret at what we may meet with,

if we are walking with Christ we shall see His interests in a brother—in the church. What a blessed thing to carry everything to God! The word in verse 18 refers to a man walking in the whole armour.

The apostle took the love of the saints for granted. We also, if walking in the Spirit, can always count on others being interested in our affairs.